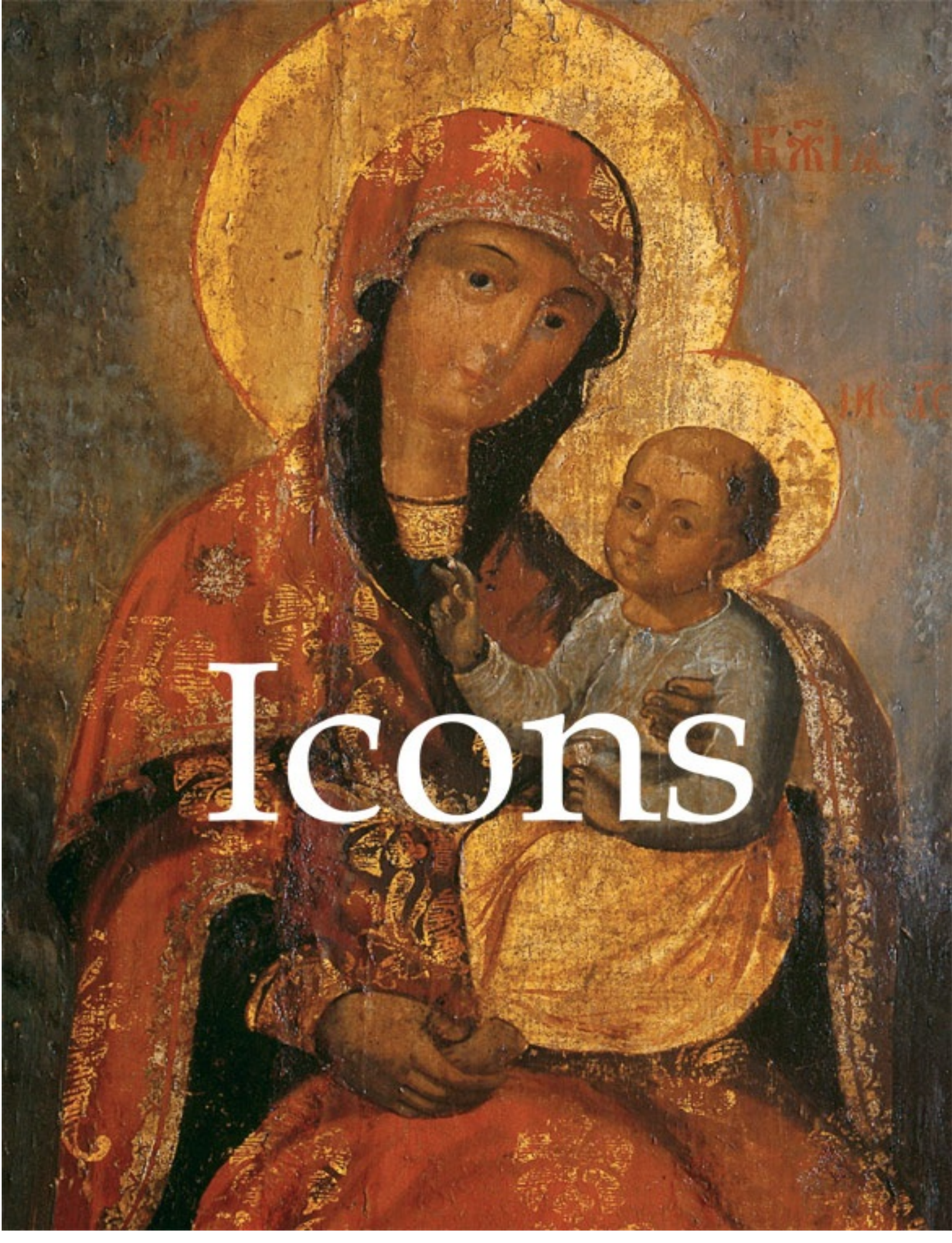

Icons

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“Visible things are images of invisible and intangible things, on which they throw a faint light.”

— St John Damascene

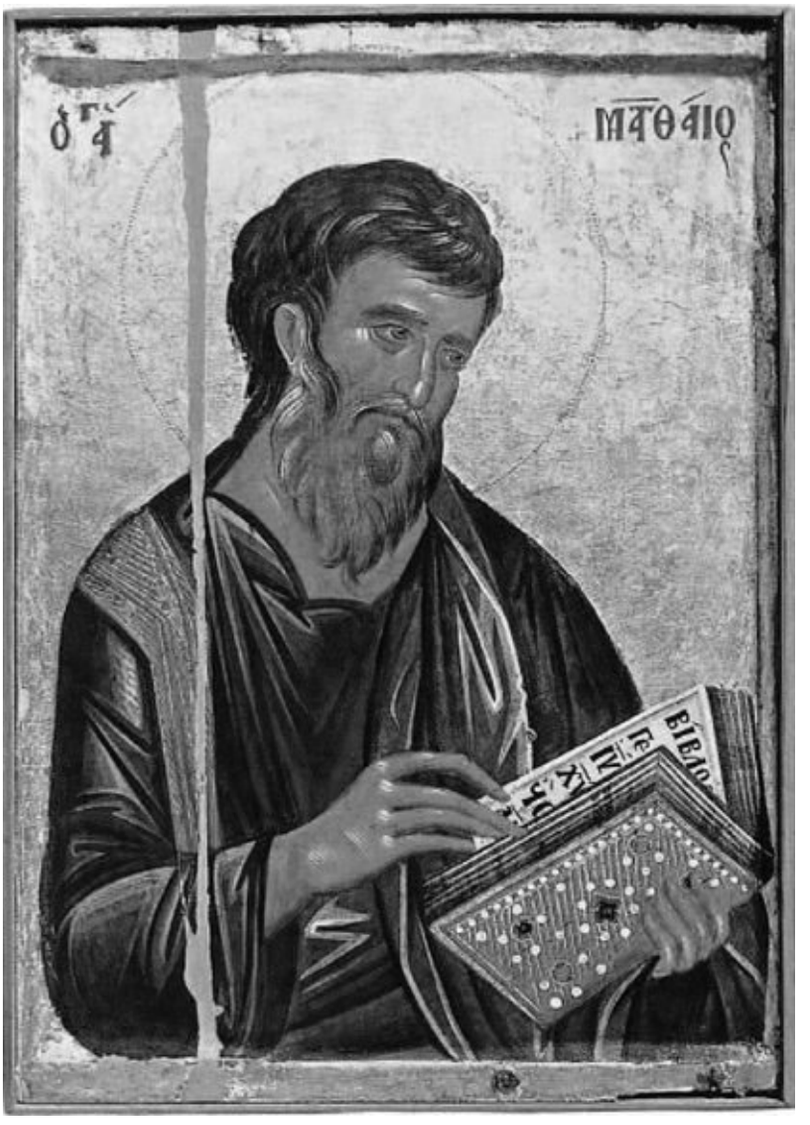
# Table of contents

FROM THE ELEVENTH TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

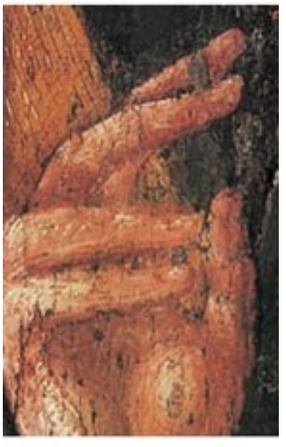
St Peter

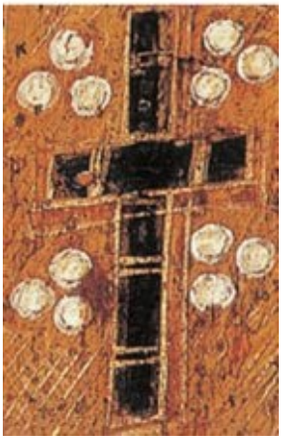
Virgin and Child

Index


ΜΑΘΑΙΟΣ







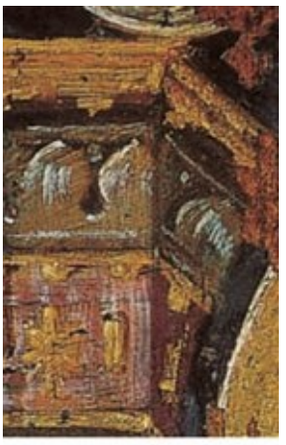
**FROM THE ELEVENTH TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**
(From Byzantine origins to the Baroque)

For the Eastern Slavs, as for all Christian peoples, the cult of the icon was synonymous with Byzantium, the mighty medieval empire with Constantinople — "The New Rome" — as its capital. From the fourth century on, Byzantium exerted a political and religious influence on the whole of Christian Europe.

Christ Pantocrator

6th century
St Catherine's Monastery,
Mount Sinaï, Egypt







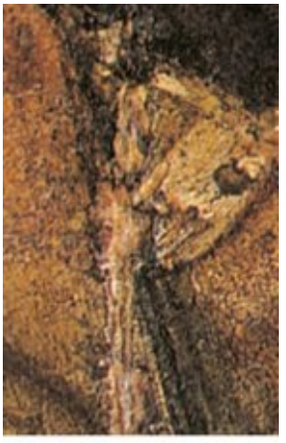


In the Byzantine Empire the veneration of icons became an integral part of the Holy Liturgy, though the practice only won official approval after the dramatic events of the years of iconoclasm (eighth-ninth centuries). The struggle between the iconoclasts and the supporters of icons led to the formulation of a doctrinal justification for the icon's role in religious ceremonies, and created a decorative aesthetic art that came to be known as the "Byzantine" style. It changed markedly through the centuries, but the religious painting of every Orthodox country preserved the "Byzantine tradition" for centuries to come.

St Peter

6th century
St Catherine's Monastery,
Mount Sinaï, Egypt









Although icon painting rapidly became an integral part of Russian culture, initially it was an imported art form, brought to Russia from Constantinople. The name “icon” is itself indicative of its Byzantine origin, being a transliteration of the Greek word for a “likeness” or image. In 988, after sending out envoys to report on the various religious options available, Prince Vladimir of Kiev Rus (the first Russian state) adopted Christianity both for himself and his subjects, staging a mass baptism in the River Dnieper.

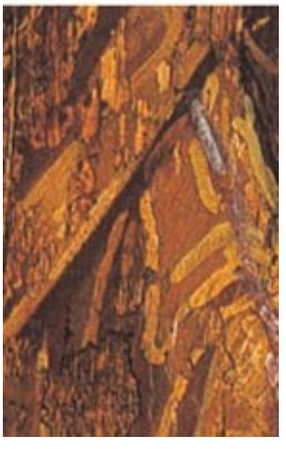
## Virgin and Child

6th century
Encaustic over gesso on panel, 35.5 x 20.5 cm
Museum of Western and Eastern Art, Kiev







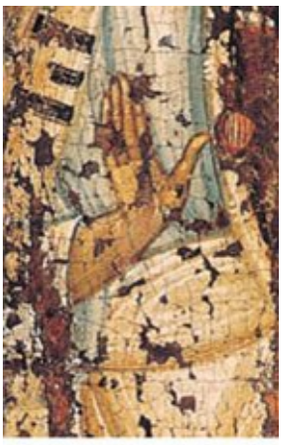


In order to build and embellish Christian places of worship, he invited Byzantine architects and artists to Kiev. As a result, the grand stone churches in Kiev were endowed with magnificent frescos and mosaics. However, many of the early Kiev churches were built of wood, which made mural decoration impractical. Instead, religious images were painted on wooden panels. And these were often displayed on a screen separating the sanctuary from the body of the church — which eventually evolved into the *iconostasis*, an elaborate tiered partition adorned with icons.

St John the Baptist

6th century
Encaustic over gesso on panel, 4.25 x 6 cm
Museum of Western and Eastern Art, Kiev







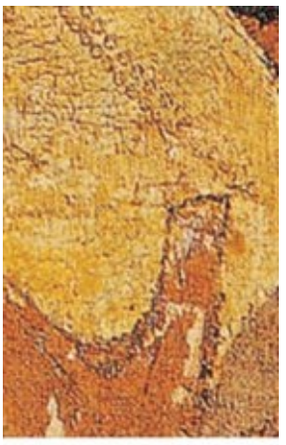


The most famous of these early icons, *The Virgin of Vladimir*, now in the Tretyakov Gallery, in Moscow, is thought to have been painted in Constantinople during the first quarter of the twelfth century. Between then and the time of Simon Ushakov (1626-86), arguably the last icon painter of stature, a great variety of schools and styles of icon painting developed, most notably those of Vladimir Suzdal, Yaroslavi, Pskov, Novgorod and Moscow.

The Virgin with Child between Two Angels

6th-7th century
Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome









Though the earliest icon painters remain anonymous, it is known that they were not all monks, and before long workshops specialising in icons and other forms of church decoration became common in many parts of Russia. Of the masters of icon painting, Theophanes the Greek (1340-1405) came from Constantinople to Russia and greatly influenced both the Novgorod and Moscow schools. Other well-known masters include Andreï Rublev whose most famous work, the *Old Testament Trinity*, is in the Tretyakov Gallery; his friend and collaborator Daniel Cherniy (a monk, as was Rublev);

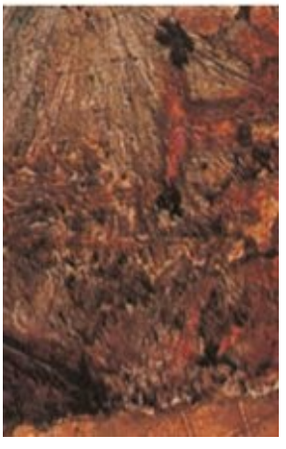
The Virgin of Haghiosoritisa,
called “Monasterium Tempuli”

6th-7th century
Santa Maria del Rosario, Rome









and Dionysius (c. 1440-1508), one of the first laymen to become a leading icon painter. At the time when Dionysius and his sons were active, private ownership of icons became increasingly common. Previously nobles and merchants had begun the practice of displaying them in a place of honour in their homes, sometimes even in a special room, but now even peasant families who could afford it began to hang icons in a *krasny ugol,* or “beautiful corner”. The Eastern Slavs were introduced to Byzantine culture in the tenth century.

A male and a female martyr

6th or 7th century
Encaustic over gesso on panel, 54.5 x 48.5 cm
Museum of Western and Eastern Art, Kiev









Their conversion to Christianity coincided with the most brilliant epoch of Byzantine art, which was reflected in the artistic culture of the young feudal state of Kievan Rus. The river route “from the Varangians to the Greeks”, passing through towns such as Novgorod and Kiev, linked the Baltic to the Black Sea. This trade artery strengthened the power of every Slavic tribe that lived in this vast territory, and Christianity assisted their unification and consolidation. They developed their own form of Byzantine culture, while the absence of any language barrier facilitated the assimilation of theological concepts.

St Sergius and Saint Bacchus

7th century
Encaustic over gesso on panel, 28.5 x 42 cm
Museum of Western and Eastern Art, Kiev





The *Lives of the Fathers of Kiev's Monastery of the Caves*, a collection of stories from the history of the monastery and its inhabitants, narrates how the Kievans were taught to paint by Greek artists, how they honed their professional skills and mastered the fundamentals of composition and drawing using time-honoured standard images that possessed a religious canonicity. Their collaboration with the Byzantines instilled in them a deep reverence for iconography, initiated them into the mysteries of the creative process, and taught them how to paint frescos, icons, and miniatures.





The Presentation in the Temple, the Baptism, the Anastasia (or the Descent into Limbo), the Transfiguration

10th century
Panel with the Twelve Great Feasts
St Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinaï, Egypt









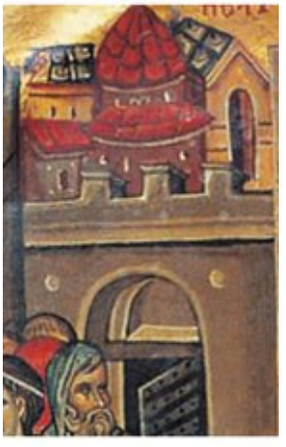
In the tenth and early eleventh centuries, the towns of Kievan Rus produced enamels and glass jewellery, as well as mosaics, frescos and illuminated manuscripts. Icons and their miracle-working powers were assigned a special place in the act of worship. They were the object of veneration and devotion and an integral part of the liturgy, and were used in official ceremonies. They gave moral support to the warrior on the battlefield, where tents were sometimes converted into chapels.

## The Baptism of Christ

10th century
Icon of one of the Twelve Great Feasts
St Catherine’s Monastery, Mount Sinaï, Egypt









Byzantine theologians asserted: “When we venerate icons, we are not worshipping them, but [are worshipping] through them those whom they depict; the rendered image becomes a conduit to the prototype.” The artistic legacy that has survived is but a fraction of what was produced in the heyday of icon creation, and any study of that legacy has to take into account the “destruction factor”. Icon-painting of the tenth and early eleventh centuries, however, can be reconstructed from a number of icons which have survived in Russia;

The Raising of Lazarus,
the Moving into Jerusalem,
the Ascension, the Pentecost

10th century
Panel representing the Twelve Great Feasts
St Catherine’s Monastery, Mount Sinaï, Egypt









these include several well-known examples that are either the work of Kievan artistic culture or stand in the same tradition. Their attribution and dating have been the object of debate throughout the twentieth century, a debate that has still not been resolved. An example is the famous two-sided icon *St George the Warrior* (eleventh-twelfth centuries) in the Cathedral of the Assumption in the Moscow Kremlin. Its epic style and the Hellenistic nobility of the saint's features remind some researchers, and not without reason, of the monumental paintings in Kiev's St Sophia Cathedral.

St Nicolas and scenes of his life

10th century
Pinacoteca Provinciale di Bari









The image's epic character is enhanced by the icon's unusually large size (the warrior's seated figure is double life-size), roughly that of an altar-screen of the eleventh century. The late-eleventh/early-twelfth-century icon *Our Lady of the Great Panagia* is often ascribed to the legendary artist Alimpi, a monk in Kiev's Monastery of the Caves, who lived in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries and was subsequently canonised. The superbly-executed figure of the Virgin Orans with the Saviour Emmanuel on her lap combines poetic femininity with solemn majesty.

St Luke the Evangelist

1056-1057
Miniature from the Ostromir Gospel
National Library of Russia, St Petersburg









It possesses a monumental compositional unity that is peculiar to mosaics. In its proportions and its treatment of the golds of the stole it bears an indisputable resem-blance to the mosaics in St Michael's Golden-Domed Cathedral, Kiev (1108-1113). In the whole of Kievan Rus only Kiev possessed any mosaics, and it is therefore probably in that city that the master painted his mosaic-style icons. These include the twelfth-century icon *The Archangel Gabriel ("The Golden-Haired Angel")*.

The Synaxis of the Saint Bishops

1073
Miniature from the Ostromir Gospel,
Historical Museum Moscow







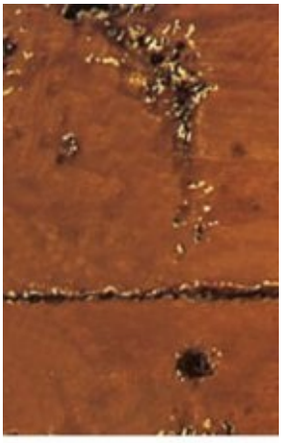


In the early twelfth century a masterpiece of late-eleventh/early-twelfth-century icon-painting was brought to Kiev from Constantinople — *Our Lady of Vladimir*. Because it was installed in the residence of the Great Princes of Kiev in the town of Vyshgorod, it is sometimes referred to as *Our Lady of Vyshgorod-Vladimir*. Once on Kievan soil, this exceptionally fine work was covered in glory and was much venerated. In 1155, to assert his sovereignty over the Principality of Vladimir-Suzdal, the son of the then Prince of Kiev Yuri Dolgorukov, Andrei Bogolyubski, removed the icon to Vladimir-on-Klyazma.

The Virgin of the Caves (Svenskaya)

11th-early 12th century
Egg tempera on panel, 67 x 42 cm
Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow









It became an object of veneration in his principality, and later in the whole of Russia. The unknown painter created what is perhaps one of the saddest and most lyrical images of Mary in the history of art. The period of feudal fragmentation (the second half of the twelfth century to the first half of the thirteenth) led to the formation of large and small sovereign principalities, usually with no fixed borders. Roman of Galicia helped Byzantium to repulse the Polovtsian invasion of 1197-8, but in 1203 Constantinople fell to the Crusaders, and Roman himself died in 1205 in the war with Poland, leaving behind two young sons, Daniel and Basil.

The Virgin of Vladimir

11th-early 12th century
Egg tempera on panel, 78 x 55 cm
Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow









The Principality of Galicia-Volhynia entered a period of turmoil, as Hungary, Poland and the local boyars struggled for control. It lasted more than thirty years, until Daniel and Basil came to power, first in Volhynia, then in Galicia, where Daniel was only confirmed as ruler in 1245. Starting in 1239, Tartar-Mongol hordes swept through the whole of Russia, except for the Novgorod lands. The brothers Daniel of Galicia (d. 1264) and Basil (d. 1269) devoted the rest of their days to resisting the invasion; but victory eluded them.

## The Great Panagea (The Virgin Orans)

Early 12th century
Egg tempera on panel, 194 x 120 cm
Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow







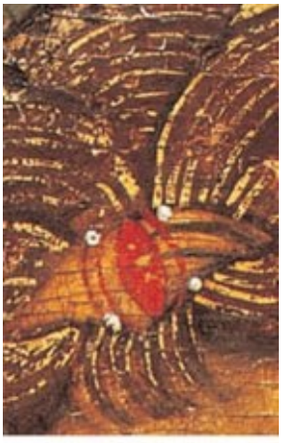


The artistic culture of these lands in the thirteenth century can only be reconstructed from architectural remains, archaeological excavations, and contemporary chronicles. Prince Daniel of Galicia spent part of his life at the court of the King of Poland and was a frequent visitor to Hungary, and it is clear that his artistic tastes combined a predilection for old-Russian ideals with an appreciation of the beauty of Romanesque art.

The Vernicle

Middle of 12th century
Egg tempera on panel, 77 x 71 cm
Historical Museum, Moscow









In the fourteenth century, the Ukrainian lands fell under the influence of the neighbouring states of Poland, Hungary, and Lithuania, which had the capacity to resist the Golden Horde, and by the end of the century they had divided them amongst themselves: the Dnieper region and Volhynia were placed under Lithuanian rule, whilst Galicia fell to Poland. In the fifteenth century Western Podolia went to Poland, Eastern Podolia to Lithuania, Bukovina to Moldavia, and Transcarpathia to Hungary. But the politically divided peoples did not lose sight of their common ethnic identity, an identity that was expressed first and foremost in their language, folk customs, rituals, and Orthodox religion.

The Archangel Gabriel (The Angel with the Golden Hair)

12th century
Russian Museum, St Petersburg







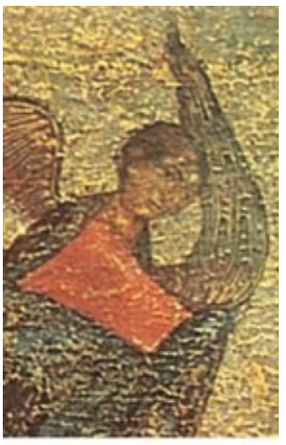


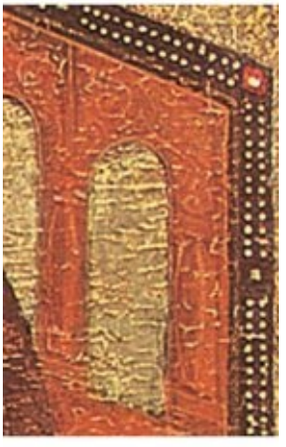
Some icons of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries echo the aesthetic ideals of both Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Byzantine typology is combined with Gothic elements, and this is particularly noticeable in those that belonged to Catholic orders (for example, the late-fourteenth/early-fifteenth-century *Dominican Virgin*) and individual Catholic churches. Completely different in feel is the fifteenth-century *Virgin Hodigitria* from the Church of St Dimitrios in the village of Krasovo (even though all three of these icons depict the Virgin Hodigitria): the figure of Mary is deeply lyrical, poetic, and feminine.

St Mark the Evangelist

1164
Miniature from the Dobrilov Gospel
State Library of Russia, Moscow


ΜΑΡΚ







The presence of Gothic elements in these icons can be explained not just by the masters' exposure to Gothic art, but by their close collaboration with Catholic artists. In the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, artists oversaw the creation of a series of Byzantine-style paintings destined for Catholic churches. They were contracted by the Polish kings Wladislaw Jagielo (d. 1434) and Casimir IV (1427-92).

## The Virgin of Tolg

13th century
Egg tempera on cypress-wood panel, 140 x 92 cm
Atelier of Restoration, Moscow









Nevertheless, the western elements in icon-painting of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries did not affect the Orthodox imagery of the Ukrainian icon, which was also influenced by contact with Bulgaria, Serbia, Moldavia-Wallachia, and Russia. One of the remarkable works to have survived from this era is *the Adoration of the Magi* from the village of Busovysko. It is distinguished by its impeccable compositional harmony, the perfection of the figures' proportions, and the rhythm of its painting.

St Luke the Evangelist

Late 12th-early 13th century
Miniature from the Galich Gospel
Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow









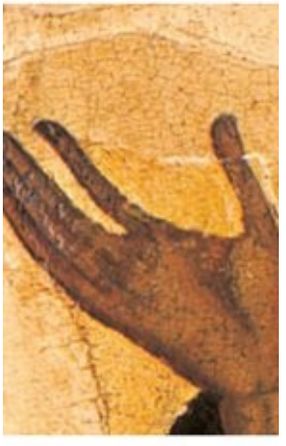
The icon recalls the frescos of the same vintage in the Church of St Onofrius in the village of Lavrovo, which displays features of Serbian painting. Most Ukrainian icons are comparatively small in size (with the exception of murals of the Passion and Last Judgement), and were painted for provincial and rural wooden churches. They were commissioned by town and village communes, and the artists undoubtedly made allowances for their tastes. Ukrainian wooden churches were characterised by the height of their interiors.

## The Virgin Hodigitria

Late 13th-early 14th century
Egg Tempera on panel, 122 x 86 cm
Local History Museum, Rovno









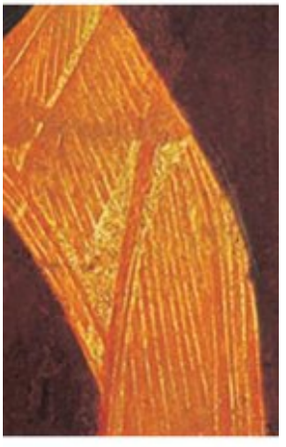
They were built of trimmed logs, and their walls were painted or covered with large icons of the Passion and Last Judgement. In masking the timber, these icons produced unexpected effects in the wooden churches, particularly when they were painted on gold backgrounds. They transformed the interior, and bring to mind the gold-background mosaics and frescos of the famous churches of Kievan Rus. The large monumental icons performed a similar function to the monumental murals on the same themes which normally adorned the same parts of the church.

St John the Baptist

Mid-14th century
Egg tempera over gesso on panel, 87.5 x 66 cm
Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg









They shared the same iconography and compositional principles. And though the fifteenth-century icon was influenced by murals, from the sixteenth century the reverse phenomenon can be observed: the narrative style of the icon and its treatment of certain scenes were taken up by mural-painters. Strict formulas were evolved for the positioning of such icons and paintings. The largest tableau — *The Crucifixion*, the cycle's apotheosis — was normally placed in the centre, flanked by depictions of scenes from the Passion, which ranged in number from six to thirty-five (for example, the late fifteenth/early sixteenth-century *Passion* from the village of Trushevichi, and the mid sixteenth-century *Passion* from Drogobych).

Christ Pantocrator

1363
Egg tempera over gesso on panel, 106 x 79 cm
Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg


ΙΣ
Ο
ΠΑΝ
ΤΟ
ΧΣ
ΚΡΑ
ΤΩΡ







An icon of the Last Judgement was almost obligatory for churches. It would be placed in various locations: either in the narthex (western end of the nave) or on the northern or southern walls of the nave. The artist often embellished the obligatory canonical scheme with figures drawn from contemporary life, such as rich men, dishonest millers, weavers, landladies in their taverns (often dancing), and non-believers of other nationalities and races.

The Archangel Gabriel

1387-1395
Egg tempera over gesso on canvas, mounted on panel
146 x 106 cm, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow







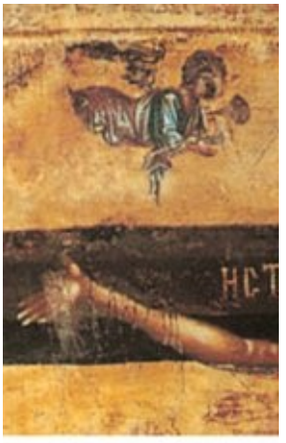



In 1576 the Volhynian baron Prince Constantine Vasilyevich of Ostrog (1526-1608) founded a school in the town of Ostrog, Volhynia, that would be known to history as the Slavic-Greco-Latin Academy. He was encouraged in his educational work by the activities of the Counter-Reformation then under way in Poland, which also affected Volhynia: in 1569, the whole territory was ceded to the Rzechpospolita (Poland). The Ostrog circle brought together intellectuals of many different nationalities — Ukrainians, Russians, Byelorussians, Greeks, Moldavians, Serbs, and Poles — who had graduated from the Universities of Cracow, Padua, and Venice.

The Apostle Peter

1387-1395
Egg tempera over gesso on canvas, mounted on panel
148 x 98 cm, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow


ПЕ
ГЄ
ЩССНХЄ
СНЪ
БЖИ
ВГО







The Academy's Orthodox character turned it into an ideological centre: it possessed not only a school, but a printing-press, which churned out polemical tracts. Constantine was a close friend of Prince Andrew of Kurbsk (*circa* 1528-83), who had emigrated to Volhynia. The Ostrog Academy educated many prominent figures of the 17th century. The Russian printing pioneer Ivan Fyodorov (*circa* 1510-83), "a Muscovite and printer of hitherto unknown books", as the people of Lvov described him on his sixteenth-century gravestone, made a great contribution to the Ostrog Academy.

The Crucifixion

14th century
Museum of Byzantine Art, Athens


ІЦ ХС
НСТАУ
МОСІЯ



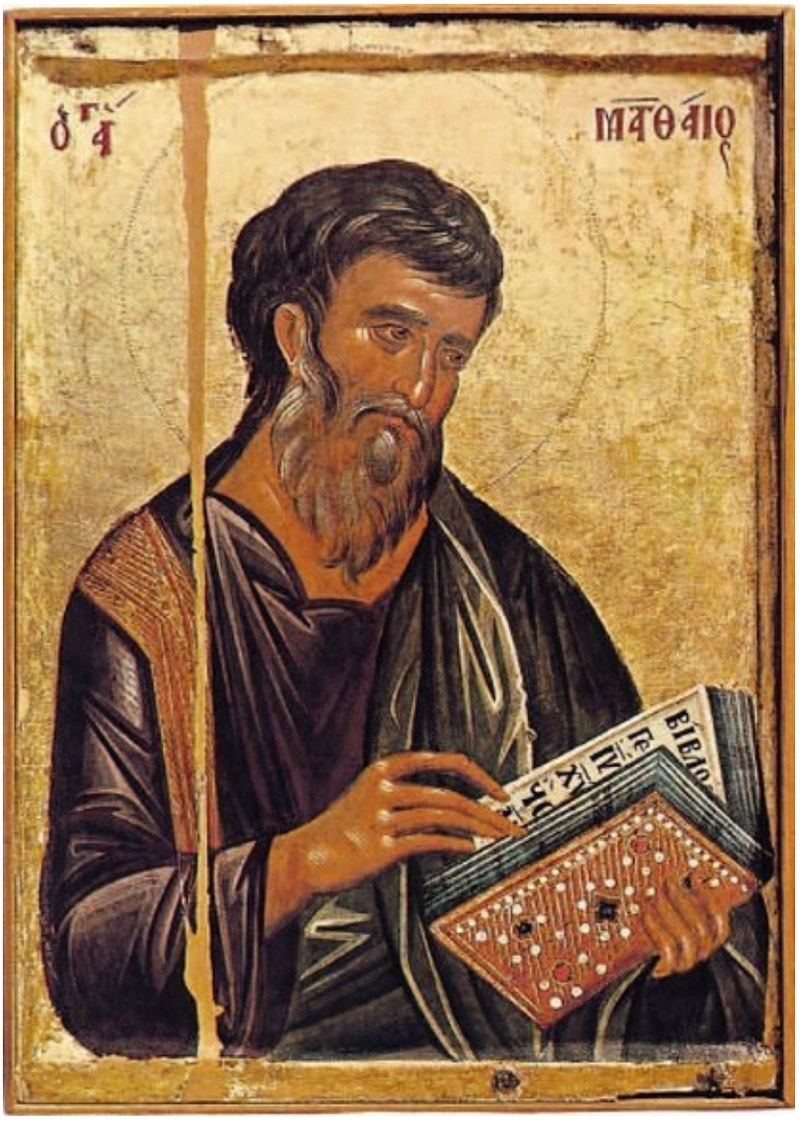




In 1580 he moved from Lvov, where in 1574 he had printed the *Books of the Apostles*, to Ostrog, where he carried on his publishing work. The Ostrog circle collectively prepared, edited, and in 1581 published the celebrated *Ostrog Bible*. It is difficult to exaggerate the Academy's importance in Ukrainian culture, and it survived until the death of its founder in 1608. The second half of the sixteenth century saw an increase in the number of educated people, who came from all social strata of the society.

St Matthew the Evangelist

14th century
Monastery of Chilandary, Mount Athos, Greece


ΜΑΘΘΑΙΟϹ







The ideas of the Reformation partly inspired the first attempts at translating the Gospels into vernacular languages. The most magnificent manuscripts were produced in Volhynia, among them the magnificent *Peresopnichi Gospels* (1556-61), decorated with miniatures of the Evangelists and wonderfully stylised Renaissance ornamen-tation, of impeccable form and stylistic purity.

The Archangel Michael

14th century
Museum of Byzantine Art, Athens


Ο Α
ΜΙΧΑ



These manuscripts were usually gifts from Volhynian barons: the *Annunciation* icon (1579) for the village church of Ivanichi, in spite of its solemnity and ostentation, shows signs of a new style, both in Mary's relaxed posture and in its imitation of engraving in the drawing of the folds of the fabrics. The Nakonyechnoye Deësis marks a new stage in the development of icon-painting, since it forms part of an altar screen rather than a high iconostasis. It contains images of the twelve Apostles, as well as icons of the Feast-day Row. The prophets were only added to the iconostasis in the late sixteenth century.



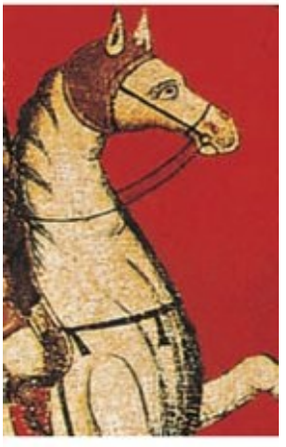


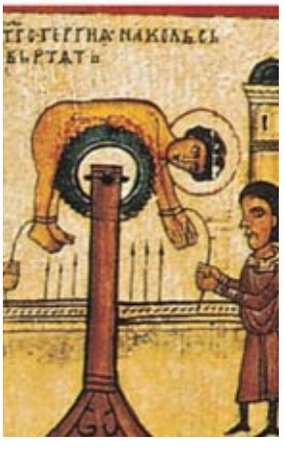
Sts Blase and Spiridon with the Herd

14th century
Museum of History, Moscow









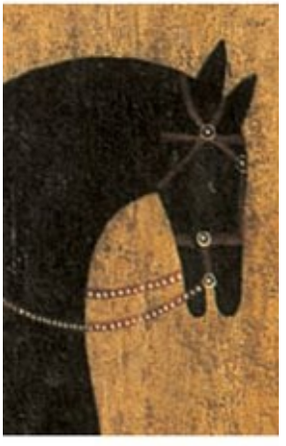
In the second half of the sixteenth century, tall iconostases were erected in both old and newly built churches. Only the royal gates were decorated with carvings. A formal plan was elaborated for the arrangement of icons on the iconostasis, yet no two of them are alike: each was accorded special veneration by the community and the priests. By the 1570s, Deësis Rows like that in Nakonyechnoye had acquired an especially majestic appearance; the figures seemed to hover in space, precisely drawn in corporeal silhouettes illuminated by a mysterious light.

St George on the Horse and Scenes from His Life

14th century
Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg









They looked stunning against the embossed or carved *gesso* backgrounds which adorned the Ukrainian icon from that time on. The stylistic changes particularly affected the icons of the feast-days: influenced by west European engravings, their iconography frequently changed. The Church reacted tolerantly to all of this. By the 1580s, artists began to include depictions of interiors and household items. The biggest changes occurred in icons of the Passion and the Last Judgement.

The Miracle of St George and the Dragon

14th century
National Museum, Lvov







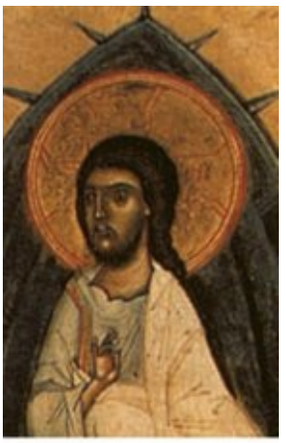


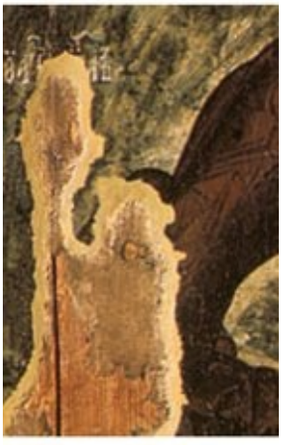
The masters painted accurate yet grotesque portraits of evil men, and introduced contemporary costumes, which combine whimsically with the conventional architecture of pavilions, the arbitrary scale of the figures, and the reverse perspective. They sometimes used both free drawing and a traditional treatment of the face in one and the same icon. The depiction of landscape in icons started to change from the 1580s: instead of the conventional ledged hillocks, the masters painted simplified yet immediately recognisable versions of the Carpathian landscape, with its characteristic features.

## The Transfiguration

Late 14th-early 15th century
Egg Tempera on panel, 92 x 59 cm
National Museum, Lvov









They skilfully combined the conventional two-dimensional treatment of landscape with aerial perspective, conveyed through the lighting. The temptation to use western European art, especially engravings, as a model went hand in hand with an awareness of the need not to do so indiscriminately, since the masters were obliged always to preserve the sense of sanctity that made their works genuine icons. Nevertheless, by the end of the sixteenth century, the traditional icon had largely gone by the board.

The Transfiguration

Late 14th-early 15th century
Egg Tempera on panel, 154 x 101 cm
National Museum, Lvov







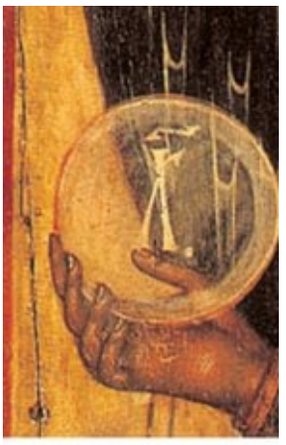


The secular portrait began to have an impact on the icon as early as the sixteenth century. A good example of this transitional period is the *Virgin of the Akathistos Hymn* from 1599 by the master Theodore of Lvov. The artist does not violate the iconography of the *Virgin Hodigitria*, yet Mary's face, poetic and attractive, seems to be that of a real woman. The master was obviously a portraitist. To give the figure a greater sense of movement, he used oil paints on egg tempera.

## The Raising of Lazarus

Late 14th or early 15th century
Egg tempera over gesso on panel, 54.5 x 44.4 cm
Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg









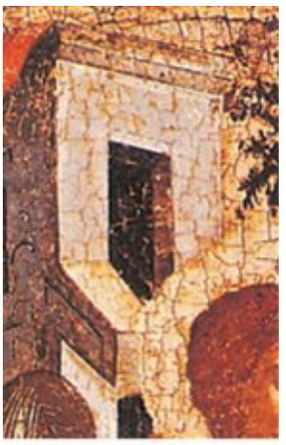
The art of the new era brought about fundamental changes in the appearance of the icon of the 17th and 18th centuries. The dawn of the 17th century marked a stylistic watershed in religious painting. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, most of Eastern Europe was wracked by social, economic, and political conflicts, which were exacerbated by religious strife. Poland had embarked on its struggle with the Reformation, a struggle that involved the "Catholicisation" of adherents of different faiths, or "schismatics".

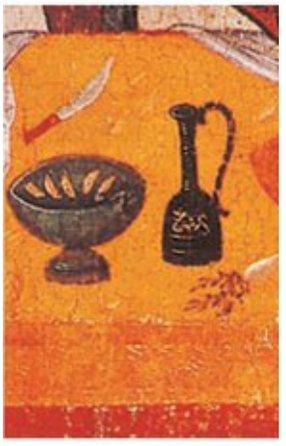
The Archangel Gabriel (from the Deesis)

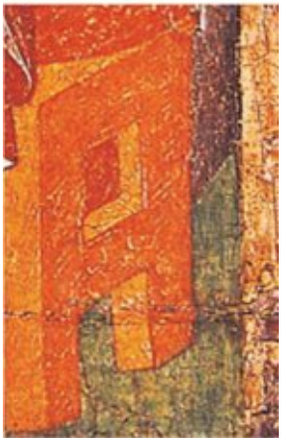
Early 15th century
National Museum, Lvov



46







The Union of Beresteczko of 1596 represented a successful diplomatic step in this direction. The Counter-Reformation was categorical and resolute, and it offered the Ukrainians the Greek-Catholic Uniate confession, subordinate to the Bishop of Rome. But the establishment of this new church acted as yet another spur to the many-faceted national liberation movements, which engulfed the Ukraine from the late sixteenth century and would be active for a further two hundred years.

Abraham Entertaining the Three Angels (Trinity Icon)

Andrej Roublev, 1425
Egg tempera over gesso on canvas, mounted on panel
36 x 54.2 cm, Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg









In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the insurrections developed into a national liberation war (1648-54) that spread throughout the Ukraine. The war with Poland drew in Turkey, Russia and the Crimean Tartars, but it was the Zaporozhe Cossacks who played the leading role. The peace proposals agreed between Russia and the Ukraine at the Pereyaslav Council in 1654 were never implemented, and the Truce of Andrusovo of 1667 between Poland and Russia divided the Ukraine along the Dnieper — Poland took its right bank, whilst Russia took its left bank and Kiev.

The Descent into Limbo

15th century
Egg tempera over gesso on canvas, 32.2 x 27 cm
Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg









The first half of the seventeenth century saw an explosion in publishing, and the accompanying development of various literary genres, first and foremost the liturgical and polemical genres (the latter highly topical during the struggle against the Union), but also the so-called “school drama” and the eulogy, often in verse. The acorn planted by the Muscovite book-publisher Ivan Fyodorov was growing into a mighty oak tree.

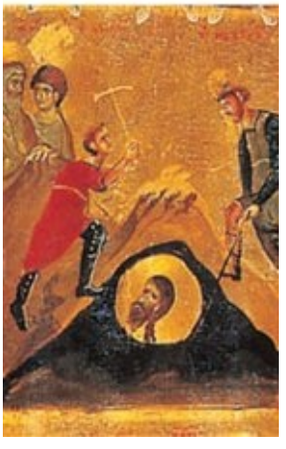
The Nativity of St. John the Baptist

15th century
Egg tempera over gesso on canvas, 65 x 63 cm
Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg









Book-publishing was stimulated by the development of engraving — woodcuts in the first half of the century, relief engraving in the second. The college of the Kiev Brotherhood, founded in 1632 by the Metropolitan of Kiev Peter Mogila (1596-1647), was the direct ancestor of the first East-Slavic university — the Kiev-Mogila Collegium. Peter Mogila, a celebrated polemicist and patron, devoted a great deal of effort to reforming and strengthening the authority of the Ukrainian church.

Menologion of the Month of February

c. 15th century
St Catherine’s Monastery, Mount Sinaï, Egypt









The rebirth of Kiev's cultural life was greatly aided by the Lvov intellectuals who took up residence in the city. The importance of Kiev as a centre of artistic culture in the first half of the seventeenth century is attested to by numerous engravings and gorgeously decorated books, and by the enthusiastic testimony of travellers. They describe the interiors and iconostases of the city's churches, and give particularly detailed descriptions of their icons.

The Prophet Elias in the Desert

c. 15th century
Karelian Republic Art Museum, Petrozavodsk


ПРР·ІЛІА







Unfortunately, only one of these has survived — the early seventeenth-century *St Nicholas*; only recently discovered by restorers, it is stylistically closest to Lvov icons and miniatures of the time. The Lvov Brotherhood (which was independent of the Ukrainian church hierarchy) enjoyed a particular authority among the brotherhoods. Its members were energetic, educated, fairly well-to-do petty bourgeois, who made their presence felt in the city by founding their own Orthodox centre on Rus Street.

Denys, the Great Prophets Daniel, Jeremiah and Jessaia

c. 15th century
From the register of the prophets from the iconostase Monastery of Ferapont









Just how much the petty bourgeoisie had consolidated its position in the city can be seen from Lvov's Renaissance stone mansions, which were sometimes austere and functional, sometimes almost palatial. They belonged to members of the various different nationalities that had settled in this cosmopolitan city — Poles, Greeks, Ukrainians, Armenians, and Italians. The Polish petty bourgeois were often so rich that they could afford to build themselves family chapels.

Christ Pantocrator

15th century
National Museum, Lvov







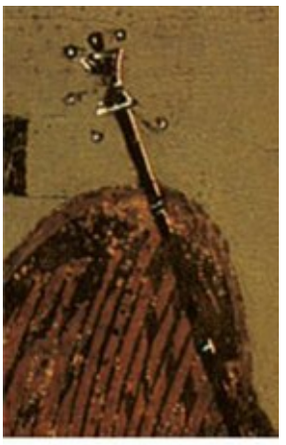


The successes of the Counter-Revolution led to the Roman Catholic Church's assuming an increasingly important role in the city: large plots of land were set aside for monasteries of the various Catholic orders, behind whose fortress-like walls the monks felt themselves secure and sovereign. This is why it was so important to assert the claims of Orthodox culture through the construction of the complex buildings.

The Nativity of the Virgin

15th century
National Museum, Lvov









The Lvov Brotherhood's complex was composed of the Church of the Assumption (1591-1629), the Chapel of the Three Prelates, and the Kornyaktos Bell Tower (1572-1578), so called in honour of its founder — the Greek Constantine Kornyaktos, an influential member of the Brotherhood. Most of the architects were Italian: Peter Italius, Paul Rimlyanin ("the Roman"), Ambrose Prikhilni, Vojtech Kapinos, and Peter Barbon.

The Archangel Michael (from the Deesis)

15th century
The Church of the Exaltation on the Holy Cross
Drogobych









Following the tastes and specific instructions of the Brotherhood, they combined the stylistic purity of Renaissance architecture with a compositional scheme typical of Ukrainian folk architecture, which made the churches and bell tower stand out from the surrounding Catholic churches; the Brotherhood's complex was built as a response to all the early-Baroque churches and chapels in the city.

St John Chrysostom (from the Deesis)

15th century
Egg tempera on panel, 93 x 50 cm
Regional Museum, Drogobych









The iconostasis for Lvov's Church of the Assumption was entrusted to the most sought-after Ukrainian painter of the time in the city, Theodore Syenkovich (d. *circa* 1631). He was paid the unprecedented sum of 2,000 zlotys for the work. It was completed in time for the church's consecration in 1630, but was badly damaged in the fire that broke out shortly afterwards. It was only restored in 1638, for 1,200 zlotys, by Syenkovich's brother-in-law Mykola Petrakhnovich.

## The Apostle Paul (from the Deesis)

15th century
Egg tempera on panel, 93 x 50 cm
Regional Museum, Drogobych







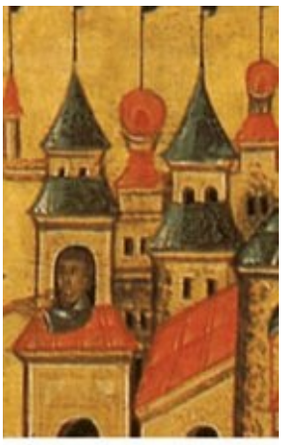


The contract between the Brothers and Petrakhnovich stipulated that “the work must be as lavishly decorated as possible, using only the best and most resilient paints and pure, unadulterated gold, and must be richly executed on a good-quality priming and completed by the specified date.” The iconostasis was dismantled in 1767 and replaced by a Uniate iconostasis; a few icons remained in the Church of the Assumption, the rest were used to create a new iconostasis for the church of Ss Cosmas and Damian in the village of Bolshiye Gribovichi.

St John the Baptist (from the Deesis)

15th century
Egg tempera on panel, 93 x 50 cm
Regional Museum, Drogobych


СТЫЙ
ИЕРЕМІЯ







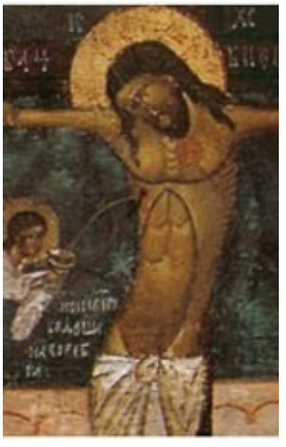
Because this generously financed iconostasis has not survived in its original form, it is rather difficult to imagine how it originally looked. Nevertheless, we know that the carved iconostasis followed a precise architectural plan: the Deësis Row was composed of columned arcades entwined with carved vines, whilst the Feast-day Row took the form of a frieze, whose exquisite carved cartouches held icons such as *The Old-Testament Trinity*, *The Saviour Not Made With Hands*, *The Saviour Emmanuel*, and *The Burning Bush*.

The Miracle of St George and the Dragon

15th century
Egg tempera on panel, 114 x 79 cm
National Art Museum, Kiev









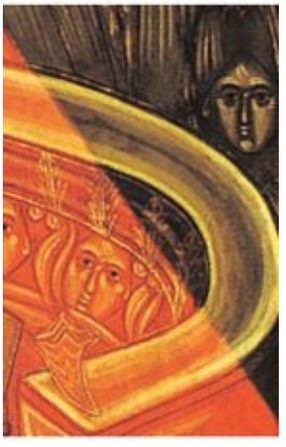
The iconostasis was the ceremonial centrepiece of the church. The brothers had obviously discussed with the artists the composition of its icons and the ideological framework of the ensemble, and they placed as much importance on the overall theological meaning as on the artists' skill. It can be assumed that individual icons, particularly those in the Passion Row, served a polemical function: to strengthen the position of Orthodoxy in its struggle with Catholicism in the Ukraine.

## The Passion of Christ

15th century
Egg tempera on panel, 192 x 133 cm
National Art Museum, Kiev









The church's iconostasis therefore played a role similar to that of Ukrainian polemical literature of the time. Theodore Syenkovich was an artist of the transitional period. He had a strong feeling for the tastes and requirements of his age. Ukrainian and foreign books decorated with engravings introduced him and his colleagues to a new repertoire of religious themes and new compositional devices, while contact with artists of other nationalities who lived in Lvov introduced him to new genres and techniques of painting.

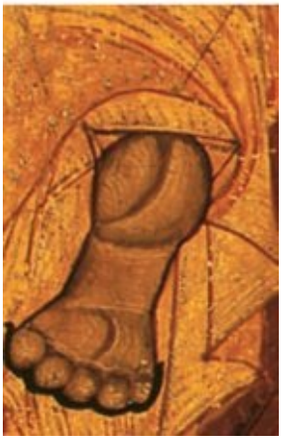
Christ in Majesty

Second half of the 15th century
Museum of Folk Architecture and Daily Life, Kiev









Both the sculpture in the round that had become an integral part of the façade and interior of Lvov architecture, and the secular genre of portrait-painting undoubtedly brought about huge changes in the artists' conception of the function of the decorative arts. But the icon-painter, though armed with knowledge of secular painting, was extremely circumspect in his exploitation of the new opportunities at his disposal.

The Virgin Elusa

Late 15th-early 16th century
Egg tempera on panel, 106 x 79 cm
Lvov Picture Gallery (Olesky Castle)







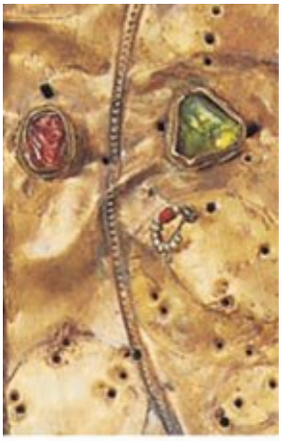


The Ukrainian school had its own rules, which demanded adherence to the symbols and imagery that gave it its Orthodox, national character. Mykola Petrakhnovich's additions to the iconostasis of the Church of the Assumption did not imitate the work of his teacher. He had the boldness of youth, particularly when it came to his treatment of the Passion, which was no longer a single icon but a series of individual tableaux forming a whole tier of the iconostasis.

Deesis

Late 15th century
National Museum, Lvov









This had the effect of laying special emphasis on the Passion cycle — and not by chance: in the early seventeenth century the Passion was a favourite theme of Ukrainian literature and theatre, particularly the so-called “school dramas”, which drew a direct parallel between the Gospel story and what was happening in the real world; suffering and steadfastness in the struggle for faith was a highly topical theme at the time. Petrakhnovich was perfectly aware of all this, and every one of his works is in some way innovative.

Virgin of Khobi

c. 15th-16th century
Icon with golden sliver coating, along with enamel and precious stones decor (the face is more recent)
Museum of Georgian Art History, Tblissi









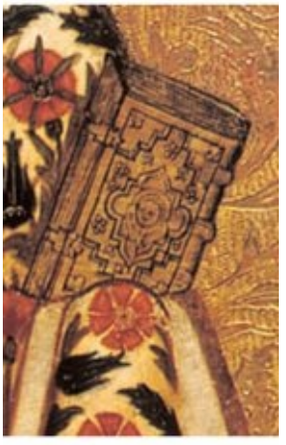
He undoubtedly borrowed heavily from German and Dutch engravings, yet every tableau shows originality. Petrakhnovich is important above all as a gifted colourist. He had an amazing sense of colour, and was audacious in his juxtaposition of different tones. He loved the combination of pink, grey, and gold with vermilion and dark blue, and would paint vigorous shades of orange onto red drapings. In contrast to his teacher Syenkovich, his painting was always spirited and resolute.

## The Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Early 16th century
Egg tempera on panel, 131 x 167 cm
The Church of the Exaltation on the Holy Cross, Drogobych









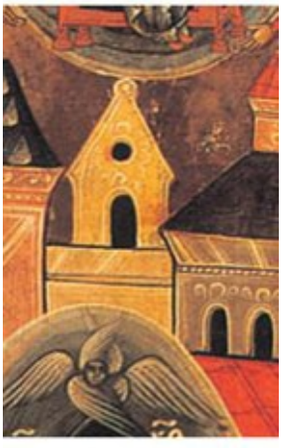
Petrakhnovich's painting shows no signs of the learned techniques of the craftsman: he approached each work in a new way. He enjoyed painting different types of costume, introduced realism into his icons, and used still-life motifs. But in spite of these realist features Petrakhnovich's icons are extremely conven-tional. The undoubtedly erudite master sometimes disappoints with the large size of his figures' heads and his disregard for anatomy. He sometimes makes bold use of linear and "reverse" perspective, thus preserving the characteristic traits of the icon.

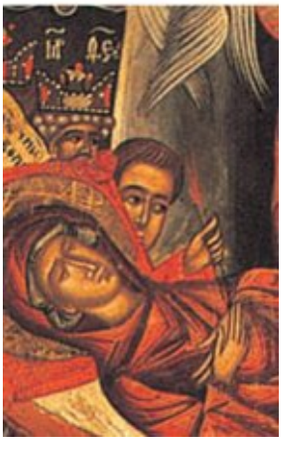
St Nicholas of Myra

Early 17th century
The Church of St Nicholas on the Bank, Kiev







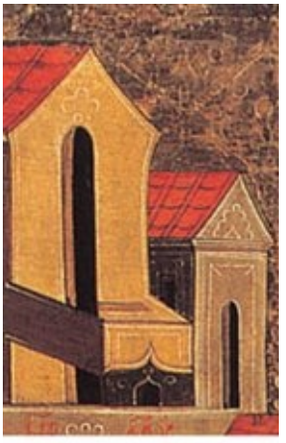


His work was also undoubtedly influenced by provincial icons, which in turn reflected the tastes of the common man. There were many provincial studios in the Ukraine, and they influenced not only painting but also engraving. As well as the iconostasis in the Church of the Assumption, Lvov also still boasts the magnificent iconostasis in the Church of St Parasceva (first half of the seventeenth century).

The Dormition

Master Alexei, 1547
National Museum, Lvov





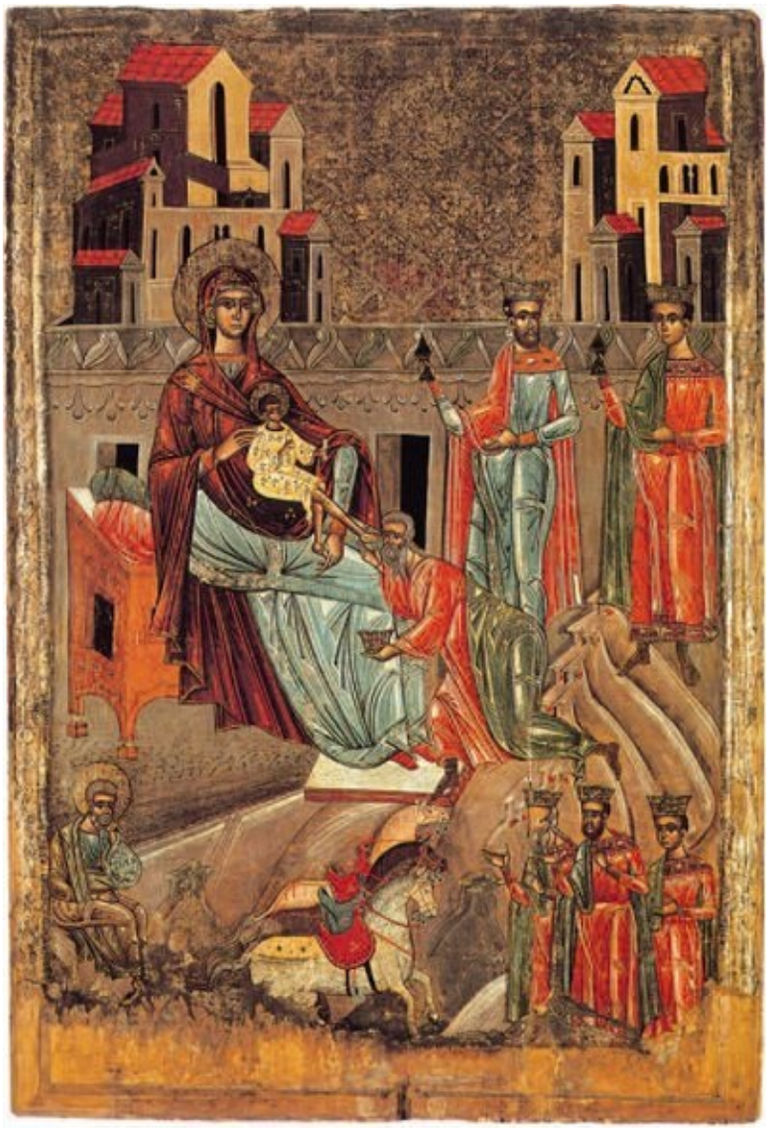




It is tall and slender and has six tiers, crowned by a *Crucifixion* framed by delicate gilded low-relief carving. It observes a Renaissance sense of proportion. The ceremonial decoration of the iconostasis is enhanced by the ornamental gold-relief backgrounds of the icons and the panels of the predella, which resemble precious fabrics. Created slightly earlier than the iconostasis in the Church of the Assumption, it expresses its own ideological agenda.

The Adoration of the Magi

Mid-16th century
National Museum, Lvov









The church's two icons of St Parasceva underline the significance of this saint for the citizens of Lvov: St Parasceva was considered the patron saint of trade. The theme of the Passion is illustrated not just in its own row, but in the iconostasis's central axis, which displays in ascending order icons of *The Last Supper*, *The Laying in the Tomb*, and the triumphal *Christ Conquering Death through Death* (a rare theme in Ukrainian painting), set beneath the *Crucifixion*.

St Nicetas and the Demon

Mid 16th century
Egg tempera on panel, 94 x 70 cm
National Museum, Lvov









In the *Passion* cycle the artists were trying to tell the Gospel story in a language that could be easily grasped by every citizen of Lvov, by illustrating the different episodes against the familiar backdrop of Lvov's stone mansions. Early icons did not concern themselves with depictions of interiors, and the trained eye can see how the artists, whether by mistake or by design, have violated the rules of linear perspective. The same phenomenon can be observed in sixteenth-century Dutch engraving.

St John the Evangelist and Prochorus

Mid 16th century
National Museum, Lvov







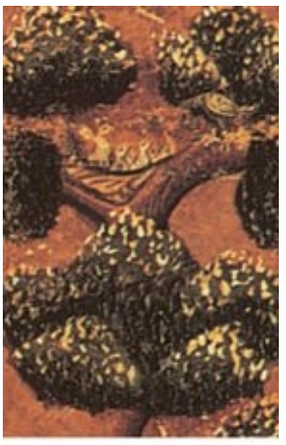


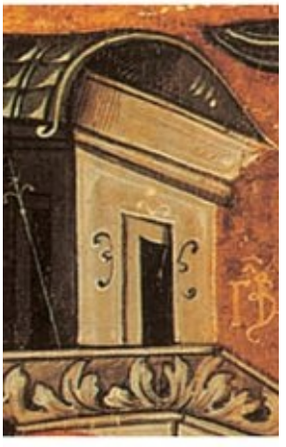
It is difficult to tell how many artists worked on the icons for this iconostasis. The creator of the Deësis was obviously an experienced portraitist. He displays a sound knowledge of the anatomy of the body in movement, and had obviously mastered the art of realist drawing. In spite of the traditional character of the Deësis, it violates the principle of representation: the interest in human character and the humanist culture of the time allowed the artist to endow each of the apostles with a complex, multi-faceted individuality.

St Paraskieva and Saint Barbara

Mid 16th century
The Church of the Exaltation on the Holy Cross
Drogobych









The arcade that divides the apostles from each other emphasises their state of contemplation; engrossed in their own thoughts, they are more like portraits than stylised ciphers. This emphasis on the individualisation of the icon's figures was a new phenomenon in religious painting. It would be incorrect to imagine that iconostases of this type were a rarity. Paul Alyepski, the son of Makarios III, Patriarch of Antioch, travelled throughout the Ukraine in 1654 and wrote:

The Annunciation and the Conception of St Anne

Mid 16th century
National Art Museum, Kiew









“The iconostases are breathtaking in their height and gilding. The magnificent large altar doors are carved in the round and gilded.” Iconostases were erected in both stone and wooden churches, both large and small; a humble wooden exterior often hides an iconostasis of amazing beauty, which gives the ascetic interior a certain festive feel. The little wooden Church of the Holy Spirit in Rogatin, near Ivano-Frankovsk, is just such a superficially unremarkable building.

The Baptism of Christ

Mid 16th century
National Art Museum, Kiew





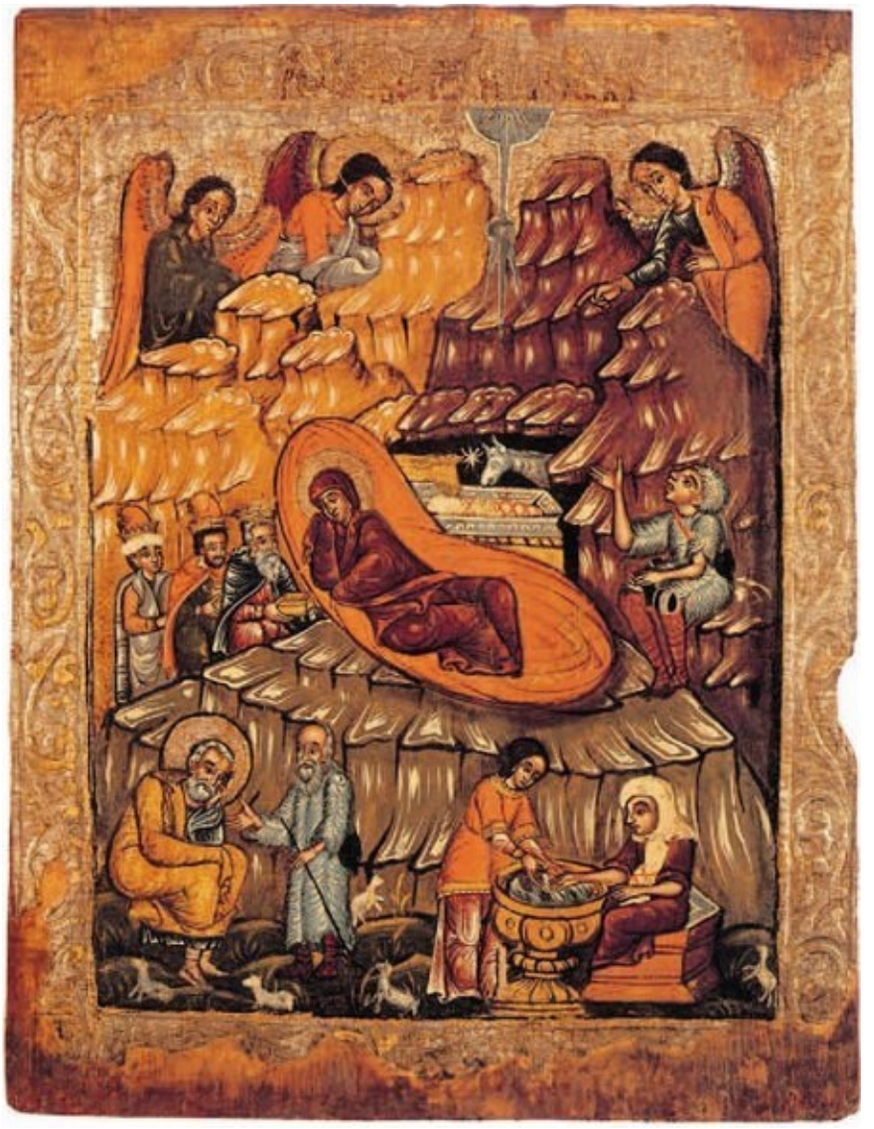




Beginning in the late sixteenth century, the Rogatin Brotherhood, which like the Lvov Brotherhood had a predominantly petty-bourgeois membership, played an important role in the town and fought against clerical interference in its affairs. The Brotherhood took an active part in the townspeoples' resistance during the national-liberation war. In 1650 an iconostasis was erected in the church. Extraordinary care went into the decoration.

The Nativity of Christ

Mid 16th century
National Art Museum, Kiew









The polychrome relief carving of the lower row is particularly magnificent. The columns between the icons are entwined with vines, which invade the icons' frames and even the inside of the archivolt, blending harmoniously with the royal gates. The polychrome carving, supported by the decorated panels of the predella, gives the iconostasis a baroque character.

The Vernicle

Mid 16th century
National Art Museum, Kiew









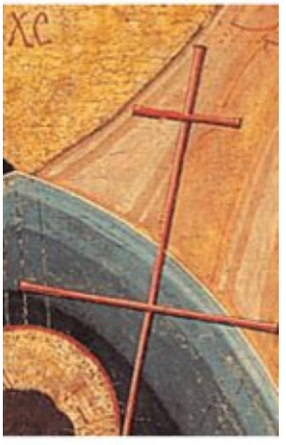
The icons themselves do not clash with their framing; they were painted by a member of the Lvov school, a master who obviously had a good understanding of the tastes and cast of mind of the predominantly petty-bourgeois town, which are reflected in his work. The *Virgin Hodigitria* is a surprisingly kindly, luminescent, benevolent matron, and in the *Old-Testament Trinity* she is totally devoid of any deep symbolical meaning.

Deesis

Master Dimitry, 1565
National Museum, Lvov









The action is transcribed to a contemporary setting. Sarah is wearing the dress of a petty bourgeois, and the chubby-faced angels are seated at a covered table laid with clear crystal goblets half filled with a rich, dark wine. As well as the central royal gates, most iconostases also had a *diakonikon* (southern) door and a *prothesis* (northern) door. The former often depicted Melchizedek, the latter the Archangel Michael.

## The Descent into Limbo

Mid 16th century
The Kiev Monastery of the Caves Museum Preserve









In the 17th and early 18th centuries, the Archangel Michael became a favourite theme in icon-painting and sculpture; he was the patron saint of the Cossack Host, and researchers have rightly noted that he embodied the ideal of the warrior-liberator. Artists therefore dressed him in knightly armour and "armed" him with an avenging sword and a shield. The *Archangel Michael* on the prothesis door of the Church of the Holy Spirit appears utterly resolute, ready either to smite or to defend.

## The Presentation in the Temple

Mid 16th century
National Art Museum, Kiew









He commands our attention with his silver armour and green tunic covered by a scarlet cloak. The bravura baroque pathos of the figure jars somewhat with the placid expression of his face, which reminds us of the angels in the *Old-Testament Trinity* and radiates goodness — the distinguishing feature of all the figures in the lower row. The rich and somewhat heavy appearance of the lower part of the iconostasis is matched by the figure of Melchizedek on the diakonikon door.

## The Apostle Peter and the Virgin

1570s
Deesis panel
National Museum, Lvov


423







He was a symbol of the priesthood and the Eucharist, which is why his image adorns both the altar murals and the sculptured façade of Lvov's Church of the Assumption. Melchizedek was also a popular figure in Ukrainian folk tales. The painter responsible for the iconostasis in the wooden Church of St George of Drogobych was the master "Stephen the Decorator, a priest's son from Myedyki", as he signed his icons.

The Apostles Simon and Bartholomew

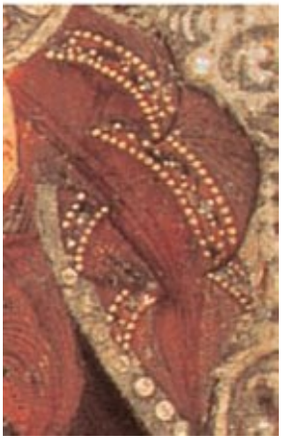
1570s
Deesis panel
National Museum, Lvov


427



He supervised the work on the church's murals, and was the creator of most of the icons in the iconostasis, with which the murals were thematically linked: the northern and southern walls were decorated with the cycles *Our Lady of the Akathistos Hymn* and *Christ of the Akathistos Hymn*. On the predella, beneath the icons of *The Virgin Hodigitria* and *Christ Pantocrator* respectively on the lower row, were depictions of *Our Lady of the Akathistos* Hymn and *The Miracle of the Holy Apostle Paul on the Island of Miletus* with the text of *Christ of the Akathistos Hymn*, both from 1659.





The Virgin of Elusa

Second half of the 16th century
National Museum, Lvov









Stephen of Myedyki had connections with the towns of Sanok and Lvov, but in 1650 he moved to Drogobych, where in the 1670s he painted the murals and icons for the Chapel of the Nativity of St John the Baptist in the Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. He had a deep knowledge of Kievan printed books, lavishly illustrated with woodcuts, and they supplied him with the motifs for some of his paintings.

The Ascension

Late 16th century
National Museum, Lvov





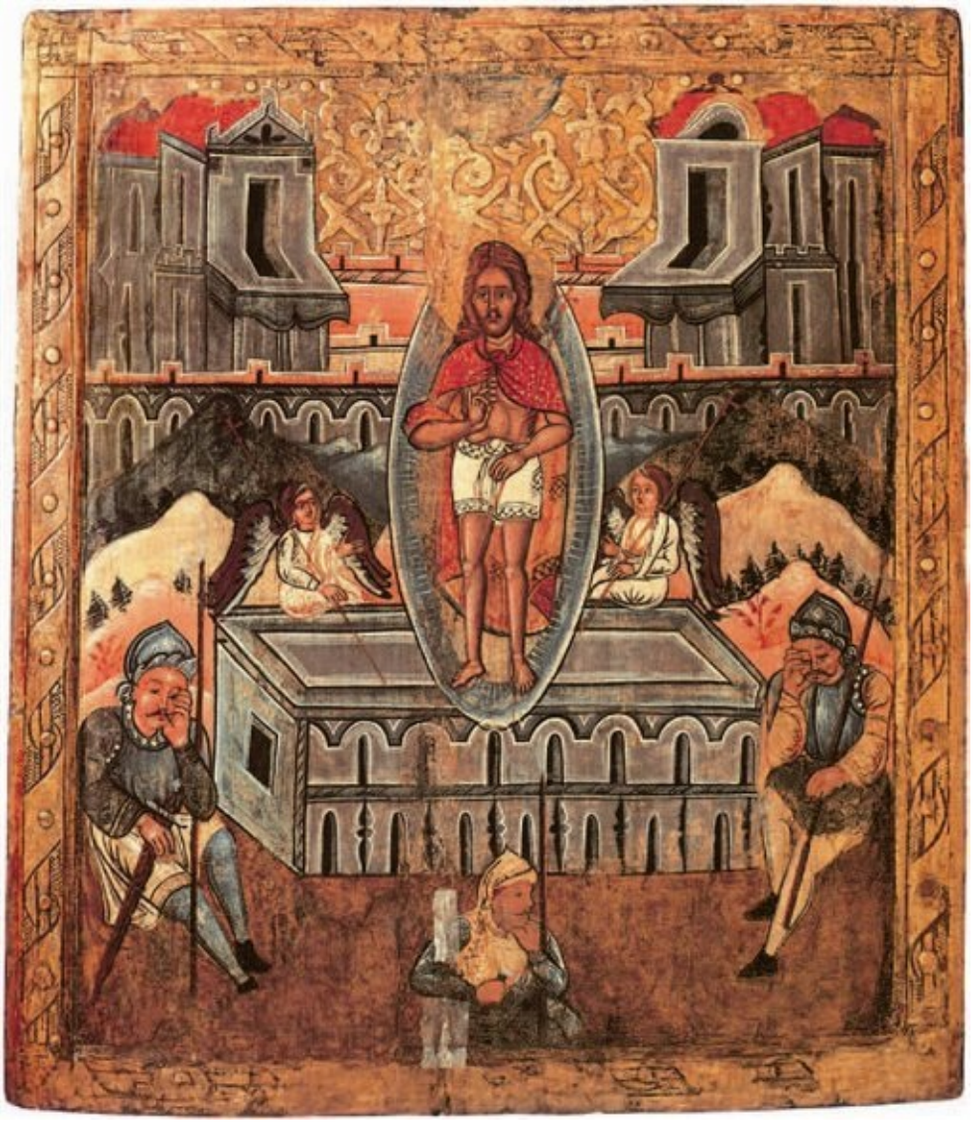




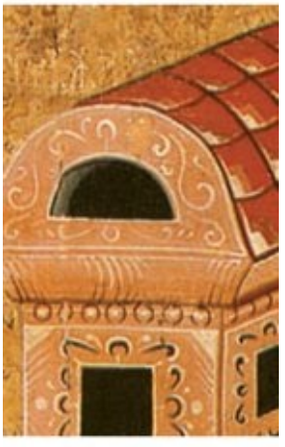
His brush transformed these motifs, and not just in the sense that it reproduced them in colour: the rather coarse engravings were thoroughly reworked. Stephen loved the icons' small dimensions, which allowed every detail of the head and figure to be clearly traced. His potential as a landscapist is obvious in *The Miracle of the Holy Apostle Paul on the Island of Miletus*, and even more so in *The Flight of Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah* in the north predella of the iconostasis.

The Resurrection

Late 16th century
National Art Museum, Kiev







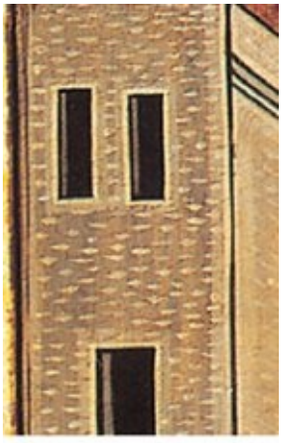


He also demonstrated his knowledge of landscape in his original frescos for the Chapel of the Nativity of St John the Baptist on the theme *Mary in Egypt* (1672).His son Ivan may have been the creator of the marvellous icon *The Acts of the Archangel Michael*, painted in the 1670s for the iconostasis of the Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The icon is an organic part of the iconostasis and its carved frame, which is crowned by an archivolt with ionic capitals.

The Annunciation

Master Fedusko of Sambor, 1579
Egg tempera on wood, 199 x 105 cm
Art Museum, Kharkov





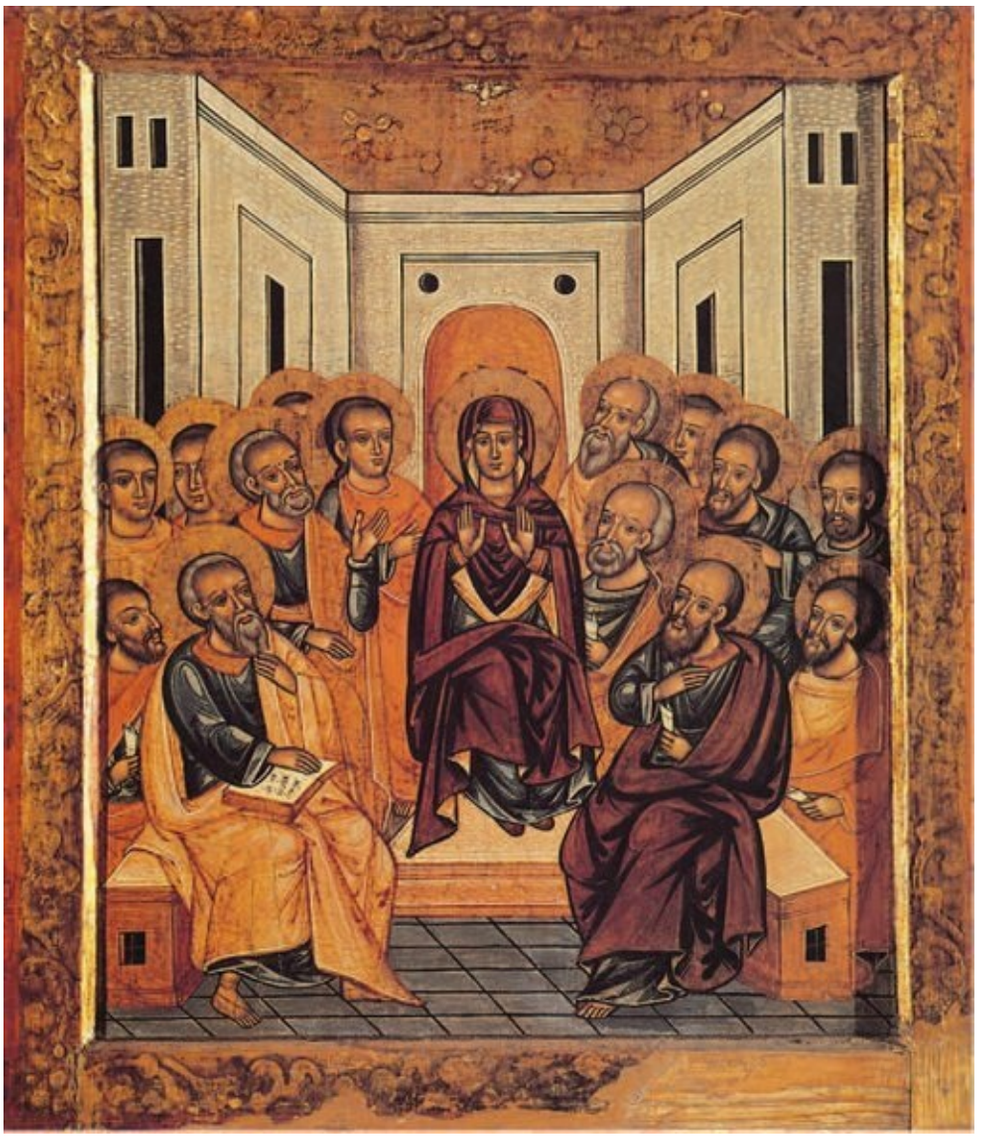




Ivan was proud that he was Stephen's son, and never missed an opportunity to remind us of the fact when he signed his works. The icons of the late 17th and early 18th centuries cannot be understood without at least a general idea of the artistic currents of the time, when the dominant style was baroque. Although it conformed to certain norms of western European art, it underwent significant adaptation, which gave rise to the concept of "Eastern baroque", a style that achieved its purest expression in literature and architecture.

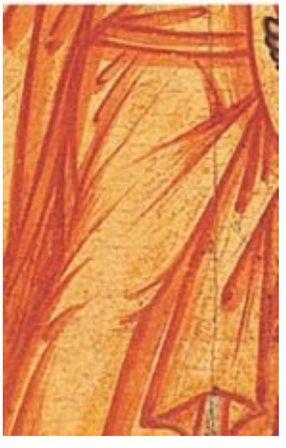
The Descent of the Holy Spirit

Late 16th century
National Museum, Lvov









The latter was characterised by a certain festive appearance, a dynamic fluidity of form, the pictorial quality of the façades and silhouettes, the unexpected effects of foreshortening, etc. The use of sculpture on the façades of buildings, both three-dimensional and relief, gave them particular visual semantics. Individual buildings and even whole complexes conformed to a set decorative pattern. In addition to biblical figures, there were sculptures of characters from history and mythology.

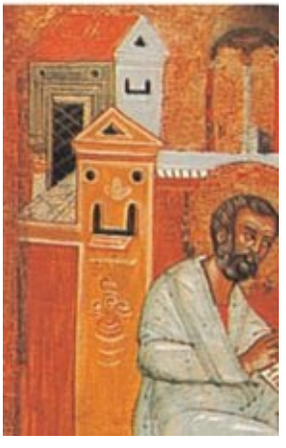
The Descent into Hell

Late 16th century
National Museum, Lwow


ΙΣΟΥ







Allegory became the favourite means of self-expression for both artists and architects. It should be pointed out that in the Ukrainian lands within Russia the baroque style naturally developed and crystallised in interaction with Russian art, whilst in the West it was influenced by contacts with the art of Poland and Austria. The seven-tiered iconostasis in the Church of the Ascension marks the next stage in the evolution of the iconostasis; though altered, it still retains the basic cycles which give it its conceptual unity. The iconostasis gave the Orthodox church a national character.

Royal Doors

Mid-16th century
Local History Museum, Rovno









Rutkovich was a first-rate artist, and in the decorative scheme of the iconostasis he gave top priority to the painting; rich and luscious, it is set off to advantage by the baroque open-work carving and the cartouches that frame the individual icons. Even the figure of Michael on the prothesis door is framed by open-work carving. The iconography of *The Appearance of Christ to Mary Magdalene* on the predella — signed by Rutkovich and dated 1680 — is unexpected for an Orthodox church:

The Virgin Hodigitria

Early 17th century
Panel of the iconostasis of the Church of St Paraskieva
Lvov









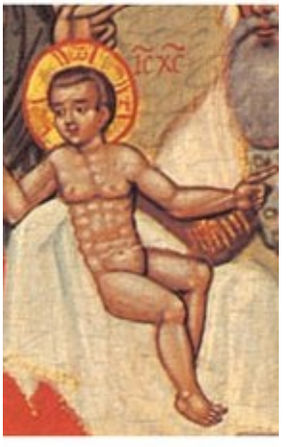
Christ is depicted as a gardener, and his wide-brimmed hat and the spade over his left shoulder give him a totally secular appearance, whilst the deftly-painted landscape makes the icon look like a secular painting. The iconostasis created by Rutkovich between 1697 and 1699 for Zhovkva's Church of the Nativity (and subsequently moved to the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin in the village of Skvaryava-Novaya) is the master's finest work.

## The Baptism of Christ

First Half of the 17th century
Panel of the Church of St Paraskieva, Lvov









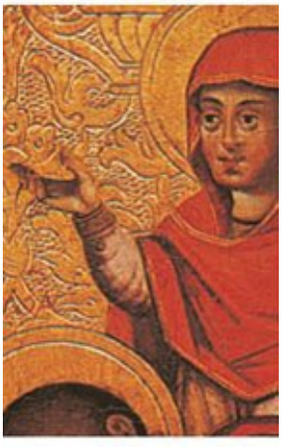
It is a dazzling monument to the many facets of the man's talent: his irrepressible imagination, the perfection of his crafts-manship, and his skill as a painter. Every Rutkovich ensemble is unique. He was very sensitive to the *zeitgeist* of his time, and was undoubtedly influenced by the era's histori-cism, which by appealing to the past hoped to strengthen faith in the future. Many history books were published during this time, including Innocent Gizyell's *Synopsis* (1674).

The Presentation in the Temple

First Half of the 17th century
Panel of the Church of St Paraskieva, Lvov







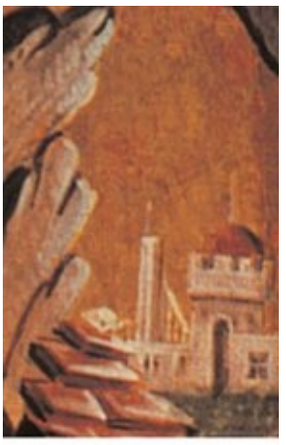


Baroque religious art strove to be topical, which accounts for Rutkovich's inclusion of representations of the Great Prince of Kiev Vladimir and the Byzantine Emperor Constantine in the iconostasis. It is no coincidence that the first Ukrainian-history play, which was published soon afterwards by Theophanes Prokopovich, was also dedicated to Prince Vladimir. Rutkovich's icons, like those of most of his contem-poraries, were heavily indebted to Dutch and German engravings, which were popular in the 17th century.

## The Entombment

First Half of the 17th century
Panel of the Church of St Paraskieva, Lvov









Nevertheless, like any genuine artist he used them as the foundation for works that were truly original. He liked dramatic action, which in his icons takes place in the countryside or in an interior. Every Rutkovich tableau is filled with poetry, with a sense of joy or sorrow, surprise or anxiety, dignified serenity or intense expectation. Rutkovich's carefully-drawn icons conceal the quivering brushstrokes, which by emphasising the essentials seem almost unintentionally to animate the figures and impart an uncommon beauty to the drapings.

The Descent into Limbo

First Half of the 17th century
Panel of the Church of St Paraskieva, Lvov







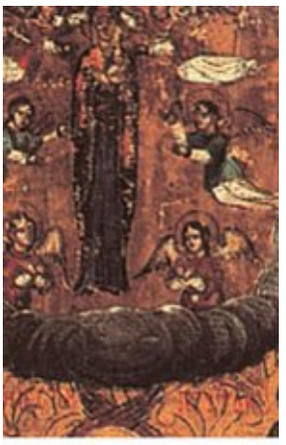


The master paid a great deal of attention to the drapings: they possess a latent movement and illumination, and sometimes they fall in heavy folds, sometimes they are light and limpid. His painting is always inspired and spirited. There is a vibrancy in Rutkovich's work that marks him as an artist of the baroque era. But the icon, as a form of religious art, modified the "baroqueness" of the painter: he is faithful to the conventions of the genre, and uses techniques such as archaic reverse perspective and certain traditional "formulas" for the depiction of the human face.

## The Apostle Peter

First Half of the 17th century
Panel of the Church of St Paraskieva, Lvov









Rutkovich can be said to be the founder of the “Zhovkva school”, which left its mark after his death in a whole series of ensembles, including the iconostasis in Zhovkva’s Church of the Trinity (1718-20), attributed to Peter Petrakhnovich (*circa* 1680-1759). Another remarkable artist associated with Zhovkva was Father Job Kondzyelevich (1667-*circa* 1740) who worked for the most part in the Volhynian monastery of Skit.

The Dormition

Fiodor Vyshensky, 1608
The Lvov Picture Gallery, (Olesky Castle)







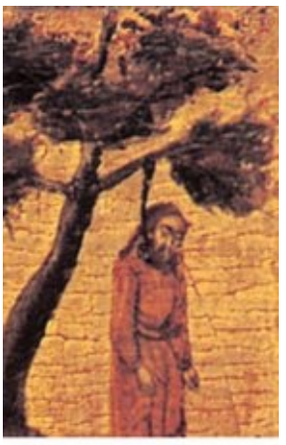


Tucked away in the Carpathian Mountains, Skit was at this time (late 17th and 18th centuries) the last bulwark of Orthodoxy in a region dominated by the Uniate Church. The monastery was a staunch defender of national pride under a foreign religious yoke; it had not accepted the Union which had been foisted on the Ukrainian church. Skit valued its links with Kiev's Monastery of the Caves, links which were not severed even during the years of the Ukraine's political fragmentation.

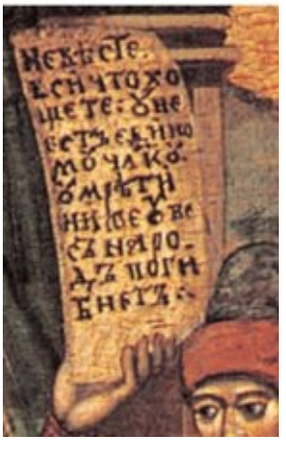
## The Descent into Hell

Fiodir Senkovich, 1616-1630
Egg tempera on panel, 59 x 51 cm
The Fraternal Church of the Dormition, Lvov









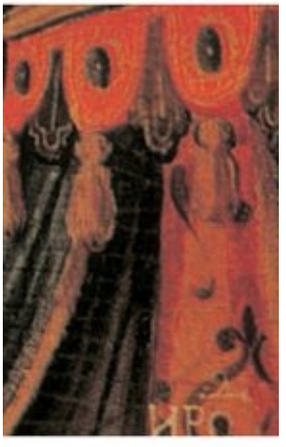
The monastery's importance and authority were confirmed by the building of the wooden Church of the Ascension, which was maintained by regular donations from the Russian tsar Theodore Alekseyevich (1661-82). Between 1698 and 1705, Kondzyelevich, "an unworthy monk", as he would sign his work, built an iconostasis for the church. We know more about this artist than we do about many of his contemporaries, yet there is still much of his life that remains unexplained.

## The Judgement of the Sanhedrin

Mykola-Morokhovsky, 1637-1638
The Fraternal Church of the Dormition, Lvov





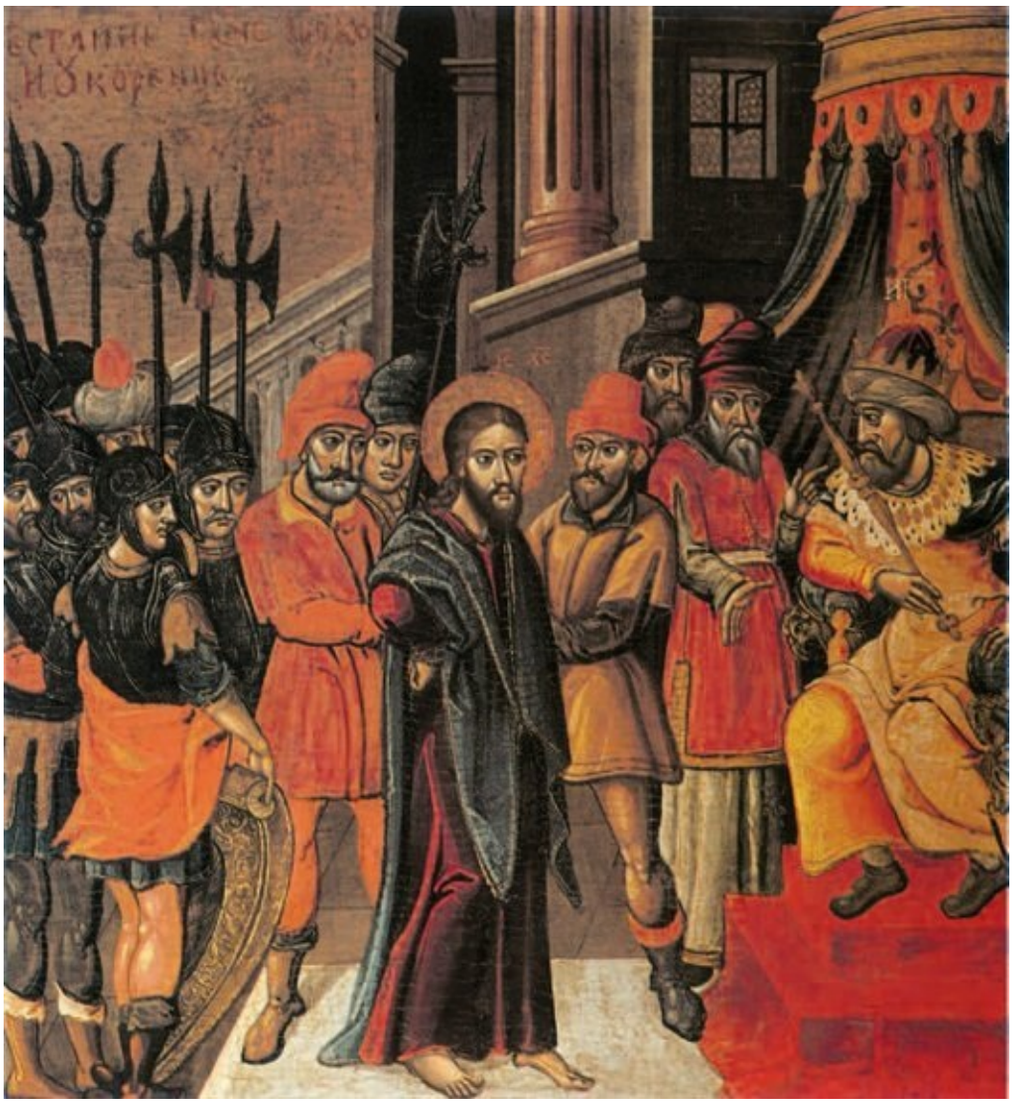


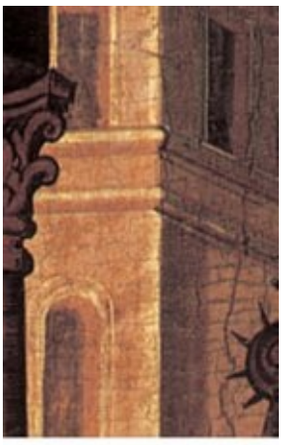


He was a monk who had spent his entire life in the Ukraine, yet his icons are imbued with the spirit of the Italian school, in both their style and their peculiar mysticism. His figures are graceful and elegant, and their faces seem to have been lifted straight from the Italian masters; we still do not know who taught him this style. There is huge variation in the level of experimentation and innovation in the Ukrainian icon of the second half of the seventeenth century, depending on the artist, the tastes of his clients, and the environment in which any given work was created.

Christ Before Herod

Mykola-Morokhovsky, 1637-1638
The Fraternal Church of the Dormition, Lvov









In the seventeenth century Kiev regained its status as a centre of Ukrainian art, and numerous iconostases were erected. Archdeacon Paul Alyepski, the son of Makarios III, Patriarch of Antioch, visited Kiev in 1654 and was greatly impressed by the skill of the Kievan painters and their talent as portraitists. In Kiev the portrait had become one of the favourite genres of painting, which explains the widespread popularity in the Ukraine of icons containing portraits.

Christ Before Pilate

Mykola-Morokhovsky, 1637-1638
The Fraternal Church of the Dormition, Lvov


ПИЛ







They are particularly common in icons of *The Protecting Veil of Our Lady*, but they can also be seen in icons of *The Crucifixion*, *The Exaltation of the Holy Cross*, and others. They depicted the church's donors; sometimes they had a votive character, sometimes they served as epitaphs. Icons sometimes commemorated statesmen, but most often Cossacks.

The Washing of Feet

Mykola-Morokhovsky, 1637-1638
The Fraternal Church of the Dormition, Lvov









The figure of Bogdan Khmelnitski in the seventeenth/early eighteenth-century icon *The Protecting Veil of Our Lady*, from the Church of the Protecting Veil looks altogether different. The legendary hetman is shown beneath Mary's veil, shielded by her stole along with a group of clerics, the tsar, and several women. The round, pink face is only superficially that of the famous hero of the national-liberation wars; he is recognisable more from his costume and his trappings of power.

## The Vernicle

1637-1638
Egg tempera on panel, 62 x 106 cm
From the Iconostasis of the Church of St Cosmas and St Damian, Bolshiye Gribovichi









All the characters in this solemn icon, of the west European *Mater Misericordiae* type, are bowed in reverential genuflection. The icon in its present form is a late seventeenth-century work, repainted in the early eighteenth century. The seventeenth-century painter was a more talented, better trained artist than the painter who “restored” the icon.

## The Apostle Thomas

1650
Egg tempera and oil on panel, 109 x 41.5 cm
From the Iconostasis of the Church of the Holy Spirit
Rogatin









Khmelnitski’s portrait suffered particularly badly during the repainting, either because the Cossack in the “restored” version is not Khmelnitski, or because the original depiction did not correspond to the artist’s image of the hetman. To make Khmelnitski easily recognisable, the icon-painter gave him conventional stylised features and dressed him in the official dress of a hetman.

## The Apostle Philip

1650
Egg tempera and oil on panel, 106 x 39 cm
Panel from the Iconostasis of the Church of the Holy Spirit
Rogatin









Between 1669 and 1676 a new iconostasis was erected in the twelfth-century Cathedral of the Assumption in the Yelyetski Monastery; its pride and joy was the miracle-working icon of Our Lady of Yelyetsk, which gave the monastery its name. Joannides Galyatovsky (d. 1688) devoted a whole painting to the miracles attributed to this icon. Even in the seventeenth century, he knew that the cathedral's icon was a copy —the twelfth-century original had been taken to Russia, where it was often copied;

## The Flight of Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah

Stefan Mediatsky, 1659
Egg tempera on panel, 75 x 68 cm
From the Iconostasis in the Church of St George







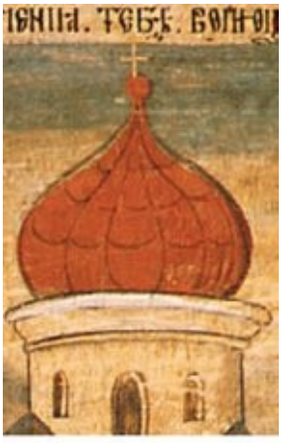


the copy in the Cathedral of the Assumption was acquired in the seventeenth century by the lay brother Constantine Mazopyeta at a Moscow bazaar. The early eighteenth-century icon reproduced in this book was undoubtedly painted in Chernigov, as its representations of Chernigov's churches and monasteries betray a first-hand knowledge of the local architecture.

## The Archangel Michael with Scenes of his Deeds

Ivan Médytsky, Second half of the 17th century
Egg tempera on panel, 107 x 77 cm
From the Iconostasis of the Church of the Exaltation
of the Holy Cross, Drogobytch









In addition to portraits of concrete historical figures, icons of this era often depict saints endowed with the features of their contemporary "namesakes". The late seventeenth-century *St Anne* icon from the Church of St John the Baptist in the village of Mikhailovka, near Sumsk, is an example of the art of the "Free Ukraine" region. Now separated from the iconostasis for which it was created, it works as an independent portrait in its own right.

## The Virgin of the Akcathistos Hymn

Stephan Mediatsky, 1659
Egg tempera on panel, 85 x 68 cm
From the iconostasis of the Church of St George Drogobytch





The author of the late seventeenth-century icon *Saints Vladimir, Boris, and Gleb*, from the church in the Volhynian village of Ratno, is a less talented artist, but in his depictions of the Russian princes he, too, ignores their established iconography, draping them in sumptuous *zhupans* to make them look more like his clients. The art school of Kiev's Monastery of the Caves enjoyed a widespread fame both within and outside the Ukraine.





The Appearance of Christ to Mary Magdalene

Ivan Rutkovich, 1680
Egg tempera on panel, 97 x 97 cm
National Museum, Lvov









Like the Kiev-Mogila Academy (the Collegium had been granted Academy status in 1701), it attracted pupils from other countries, particularly from the Balkans. The school possessed numerous works for the students to copy, including western-European engravings and so-called *Kunstbücher* (art books). It gave its pupils a broad-based training: judging from its surviving archive of drawings, it seems that every artist was expected to be capable of working as a monumentalist, an easel painter, a portraitist, and an icon-painter.

The Archangel Gabriel

Ivan Rutkovich, 1697-1699
Egg tempera on panel, 200 x 68 cm
National Museum, Lvov









He had to be able to build altars and iconostases, make sketches of carvings, know the recipes for different enamels, etc. The school provided a solid professional grounding: the pupils would draw the human figure in various different poses and from difficult angles, and would make separate studies of the head and body parts.

Christ in the House of Mary and Martha

Ivan Rutkovich, 1697-1699
Egg tempera on panel, 34 x 77 cm
National Museum, Lvov









Landscapes, animals, birds, and ornaments would be copied from models; only portrait sketches would be painted from life. The pupils would practise the art of icon-painting on wooden boards, and of monumental painting on the monastery's walls, pillars, and ceilings. The hand of Kievan painters can be seen in numerous icons found not just throughout the Ukraine but abroad, in Serbia and Hungary, where Ukrainians had their own studios, schools, and apprentices.

Sts Vladimir, Boris and Gleb

Late 17th century
National Art Museum, Kiev







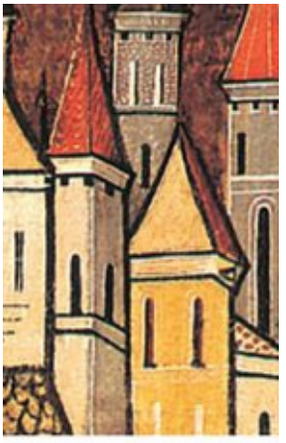


An unprecedented number of tall iconostases were erected, and their architecture, carving, and icons reflect every stage of Eastern baroque — early, mature, and rococo. An example of the mature style is the iconostasis in the Saviour-Assumption Church in the village of Bolshiye Sorochnitsy, made famous by Nicolai Gogol. The great writer was born here in 1809, and was baptised in the church, which was built by the hetman Daniel Apostol (1654-1734).

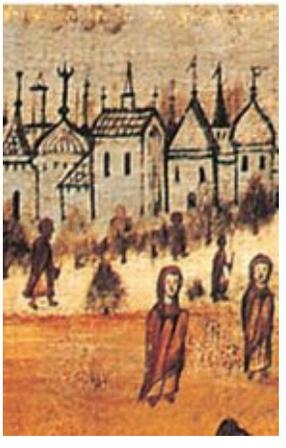
The Crucifixion, with a Portrait of the Cossack Colonel Leonty Svechka

Late 17th century
Oil on panel, 84 x 58 cm
National Art Museum, Kiev









Daniel picked a picturesque site for the church, on a branch of the river Psyol — “the river of beauty”, as Gogol called it. Reflected in the water, the church fits organically into the landscape, and its whiteness echoes the whitewashed huts of the village. The building’s design and appearance clearly reflect the principles of baroque aesthetics: the focal point of the nine-room church is a Greek cross.

The Flight into Egypt

Late 17th century
Historical and Cultural Museum of the Caves, Kiev


ВИФЛЕЕМЪ
ЕГИПЕТЪ







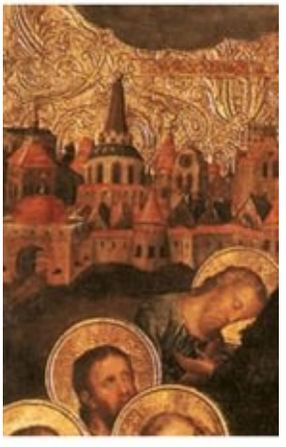
All the sharp, straight angles are clearly visible, like in a wooden building — at that time baroque churches were heavily influenced by folk architecture. This also showed in the interior, where a unity of space is observed. Unusually, the façade of the church in Bolshiye Sorochnitsy has minimal decoration, gracing only the windows, portals, and cornices. But the relief motifs are part of a complex conceptual programme that is typically baroque.

St Anne

Late 17th century
Oil on panel, 102 x 41 cm
National Art Museum, Kiev









The church is dedicated to the Feast of the Transfiguration and the idea of the Light of Tabor, and these two themes are constantly combined. The central features of the reliefs are three types of rosette, symbolising “sunlight”, “physical light”, and “white light” (the universe), which express the Transfiguration of Our Lord: “I am the Light of the world”. The rosettes also adorn the vaulting inside the church.

The Ascension

Job Kondzelevich, 1705
National Museum, Lvov









In keeping with the baroque rule of antithesis, the transitory nature of existence is contrasted with the idea of the immortality of the human race, which is expressed in the frieze of stylised dancing male and female figures that adorns the church's facade (known in baroque poetry as Mars and Venus). The central idea of the Light of Tabor was captured in the iconostasis, which sparkles and twinkles with its delicate gilded carving.

## The Intercession of the Virgin

Early 18th century
Egg tempera and oil on panel, 118 x 85 cm
National Art Museum, Kiev









The intricate intertwining of flowers, leaves, and shoots represented the Tree of Life, yet in all this riot of colour a lot of space is given over to vines, which give the “Tree of Life” the doleful symbolical subtext of “The Tree of the Cross of Jesus Christ”. Exaltation and rejoicing are balanced by the idea of suffering, and implicitly by the theme of man’s mortality: poppies, a symbol of eternal sleep, can be glimpsed here and there throughout the iconostasis, particularly in the depictions of the “namesake” saints of Daniel and his wife Juliana.

## The Intercession of the Virgin

Late 17th century
Museum of Architecture and History, Chernigov







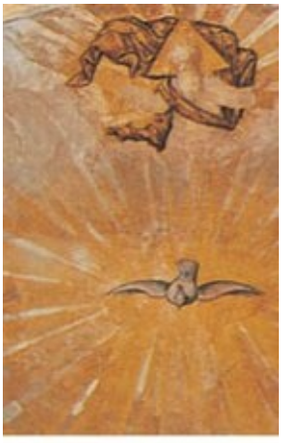


The lower row is particularly rich in carvings, and the icons echo the sumptuousness of their surrounds in the joyous splendour of the painting. The faces of *The Virgin Hodigitria* and *Christ Pantocrator* are picked out by their gold-relief ornamental backgrounds, and the figures' clothes seem to glow with a silvery-gold luminescence. This was a new allegorical technique, which conveyed a light that was literally "divine".

St George

Early 18th century
National Art Museum, Kiev









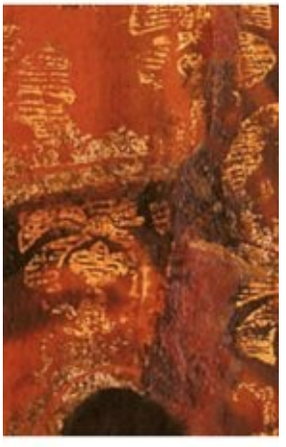
Earlier painters had simply added the gilt to the finished surface, but the eighteenth-century masters (and the iconostasis is indisputably the work of representatives of the Kiev school) painted the vestments in layers of gold and silver, which gave them a particular sparkle. The figures of Christ and Mary show not a hint of aloofness; their affable, rounded faces are not so much serene as life-affirming and full of sympathy for man and his earthly lot.

## The Synaxis of the Nine Archangels

First half of the 18th century
Historical and Cultural Museum of the Caves, Kiev









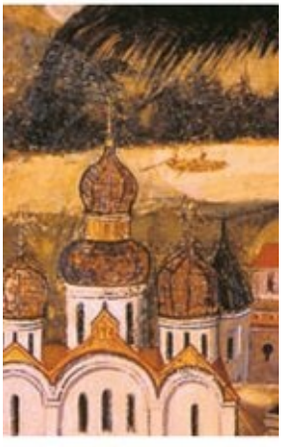
The gaps between the central section of the iconostasis and its side wings are decorated with images of the “namesake” saints of the people who commissioned it —the Prophet Daniel and St Juliana. The image of Juliana bears a marked resemblance to the hetman’s wife. Here the artists skilfully combine the “earthly” with the “divine”: St Juliana is dressed in a rather fantastical costume, but her exposed neck is adorned with a realistic contemporary necklace, her ears with earrings, and her hair with a diadem, whilst her famous flowers lie on a small baroque table.

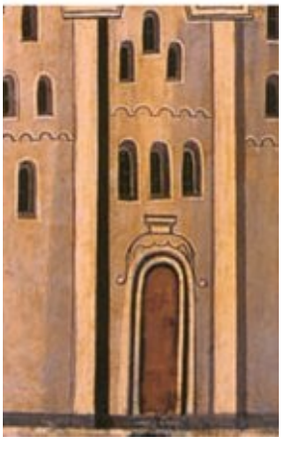
The Virgin (Yeletskaya)

1700-1703
Art Museum, Chernigov









The composition is devoid of the conventional traits of the icon: Juliana's stately magnificence and the proud turn of her head are in equal measure attributes of both a saint and an aristocratic lady. The futility of material wealth (the baroque concept of *vanitas*) is central to the icon *The Prophet Daniel*. The biblical prophet does not share the features of the 72-year-old hetman. His namesake saint appears as the personification not just of the heroic military commander, but of the wise ruler:

The Virgin (Yeletskaya)

Early 18th century
Egg tempera and oil on panel, 135 x 76 cm
Regional Museum of History, Chernigov









the Prophet Daniel is asserting the vanity of the world — this is the meaning behind the dreams he interpreted for Nebuchadnezzar and Balthazzar, which are illustrated on the scrolls. Many of the icons possess a surprising combination of fantastical locations and portraits of concrete historical figures (*The Presentation of the Virgin*, *The Dormition of the Virgin*, *The Exaltation of the Cross*, *The Protecting Veil of Our Lady*); they look like solemn processions of the hetman, his entourage, and the Cossack Elders.

The Virgin Hodigitria

1732
Oil on panel, 120 x 60 cm
From the iconostasis in the Saviour-Transfiguration Church
Bolschije Sorotschintzi









Icon art had never before known such variety, virtuosity, compositional imagi-nation, and inventiveness of technique: the icons possess both smooth glazed surfaces and thick, impulsive brush-strokes, both gold-engraved ornamentation and the flat ornamentation of the drapings, both conventional idealised images and attempts at complex psychological portraiture (for example, the prophets in the iconostasis' Prophets Row).

St Juliana

1732
Oil on panel, 105 x 56 cm
From the iconostasis
in the Saviour-Transfiguration Church
Bolschije Sorotschintzi









The ensemble illustrates the concept of the transience of human life, but illustrates just as lavishly the idea of immortality. The iconostasis in the Church of the Trinity over the entrance gate to Kiev's Monastery of the Caves, which was created at the same time (1734) as that in the Saviour-Assumption Church, is of a rather different type. It has a more modest composition, and less gilt carving: it was built into the interior of a small old-Russian church of the twelfth century, redecorated after the monastery fire of 1713.

## The Prophet Daniel

1732
Oil on panel, 120 x 65 cm
From the iconostasis
in the Saviour-Transfiguration Church
Bolschije Sorotschintzi









The little gatehouse church was transformed by the murals: it is filled with didactic pathos and echoes of religious disputes, which are illustrated in the numerous tableaux that cover the porch, vaulting, walls, altar, and pillars. Both the iconostasis and the murals serve a liturgical function, and remind the believer of the finite nature of his allotted span of life. The theme of the Trinity, a basic dogma of Orthodoxy, links the iconostasis with the cupola, which is painted with a *New-Testament Trinity*.

The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple

1732
Oil on panel, 115 x 63 cm
From the iconostasis
in the Saviour-Transfiguration Church
Bolschije Sorotschintzi









Baroque combined with realism to imbue the art with the spirit of scholastic wisdom. The iconostasis in the Church of the Trinity has no Deësis (its place is taken by a *New-Testament Trinity*), and it is crowned by a huge solemn icon of *Christ with the Cross and Heavenly Host*, beneath the figure of a dove and a conch inscribed with words of glorification. It is echoed by yet another depiction of the *Old-Testament Trinity* in the lower row. The eighteenth century had brought changes in the character of the icons of the lower row.

Deesis

1732
From the iconostasis
in the Saviour-Transfiguration Church
Bolschije Sorotschintzi









The graceful figures of the icons of *The Virgin and Child* and *Christ the Teacher* hover in the clouds, supported by delightful little cherubs. The relief cartouches, whose ornamental gilded backgrounds are decorated with initials and garlands, are adorned with tiny *putti*. The artists obviously delighted in depicting landscapes, not just in the murals and icons, but on the stalls and pulpit. All the icons of the predella have landscape backgrounds; now mysterious and mystical, now poetic and filled with air and light, they give a distinctive quality to each composition.

## The Old-Testament Trinity

1734-1735
Oil on panel, 119 x 60 cm
From the iconostasis of the gatehouse Church of the Trinity
Kiev









The monumental paintings and the icons were evidently executed by the same masters. They were pupils of the same school, and clearly understood the essential unity of the whole project, and their unity of style meant there was no disruption to the overall pictorial harmony. One of the last gasps of the baroque is the iconostasis from the wooden Church of the Transfiguration in the village of Berezna. The 100-foot-high cross-shaped church, built in 1759 by Peter Sheludko, was one of the masterpieces of wooden architecture, and it dominated the surrounding valley.

The Virgin (Bratskaya)

1734-1735
Oil on panel, 117 x 60 cm
From the iconostasis of the gatehouse Church of the Trinity
Kiev









The soaring interior space was illuminated by the light from five cupolas, which seemed to hover in the air. Its unusually large iconostasis — 56 feet high by 72 feet long — was the pride of the local community, and contained some earlier icons (the late seventeenth-century *St George the Warrior* and *The Coronation of Our Lady Enthroned with the Archangels*) as well as a magnificent, bravura Deësis from 1762. Some eighteenth-century icons reproduced in this album were created for Greek-Catholic Uniate churches.

The Saints Marytyrs Barbara and Katharina

Mid-18th century
National Art Museum, Kiev







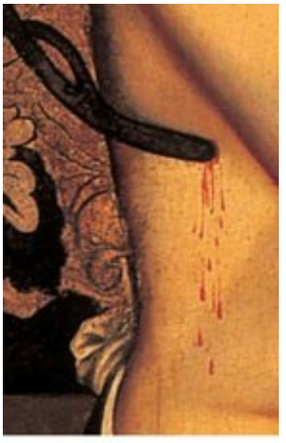


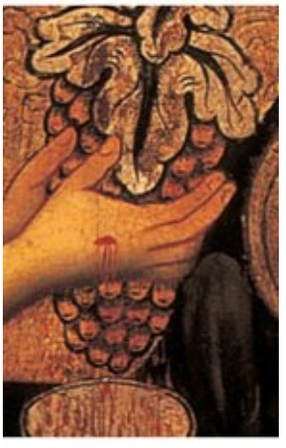
They are no different from Orthodox icons from the same time in both their iconography and their late seventeenth-century iconographical structure. Stylistic changes took place in Greek-Catholic and Orthodox icons simultaneously. The style of the icon changed, but not its essence. Therefore one and the same miracle-working icon would be venerated by both the Uniates and the Orthodox — for example, the icon of the *Protecting Veil of Our Lady*.

The Saints Martyrs Juliana and Anastasia

Mid-18th century
National Art Museum, Kiev







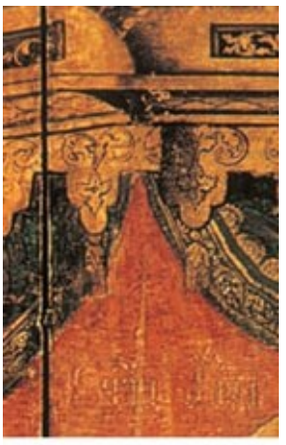


The hopes of the Polish government and clergy that the introduction of the Union would "de-nationalise" Ukrainian national consciousness were not realised. Mikhail Grushevski writes: "Because the Uniate Church did not enjoy equal status with the Catholic Church . . . it soon became part of Ukrainian national culture in the western Ukraine, and was quickly transformed into a church that was no less national in character than the Orthodox Church."

Christ of the Vine

Mid-18th century
National Art Museum, Kiev







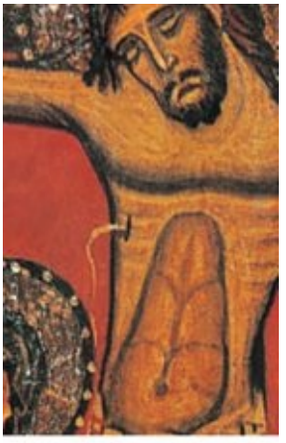


No account of the development of Icon painting would be complete without taking into account the numerous provincial studios that existed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whose works were particularly in demand amongst the peasantry. Their icons were more archaic and traditional. The masters may have changed their techniques over the two centuries, but they rarely violated traditional iconography. The humble material resources of such studios and the limited number of pigments available to them compelled their artists to use a narrow palette.

The Nativity of the Virgin

Mid-18th century
Historical and Cultural Museum of the Caves, Kiev









Museums contain impressive collections of such works. They are linked by the shared *Weltanschauung* and level of skill of the artists, and by the use of some common artistic techniques, though each is indelibly stamped with the creative personality of its creator. This text does not claim to give an exhaustive account of the entire legacy of the eleventh-to-eighteenth-century icon, but hopefully it will give the reader a flavour of its unique character.

The Crucifixion

St Catherine’s Monastery, Mount Sinaï, Egypt


ΙΣ
ΧΣ

# Index

A
Abraham Entertaining the Three Angels  (Trinity Icon), Andrej Roublev, 1425
The Adoration of the Magi, Mid-16th century
The Annunciation and the Conception of St Anne, Mid 16th century
The Annunciation, Master Fedusko of Sambor, 1579
The Apostle Paul (from the Deesis), 15th century
The Apostle Peter, 1387-1395
The Apostle Peter, First Half of the 17th century
The Apostle Peter and the Virgin, 1570s
The Apostle Philip, 1650
The Apostle Thomas, 1650
The Apostles Simon and Bartholomew, 1570s
The Appearance of Christ to Mary Magdalene, Ivan Rutkovich, 1680
The Archangel Gabriel, 1387-1395
The Archangel Gabriel (from the Deesis), Early 15th century
The Archangel Gabriel, Ivan Rutkovich, 1697-1699
The Archangel Gabriel  (The Angel with the Golden Hair), 12th century
The Archangel Michael, 14th century
The Archangel Michael (from the Deesis), 15th century
The Archangel Michael with Scenes of his Deeds, Ivan Médytsky, Second half of the 17th century
The Ascension, Job Kondzelevich, 1705
The Ascension, Late 16th century

B
The Baptism of Christ, 10th century
The Baptism of Christ, First Half of the 17th century
The Baptism of Christ, Mid 16th century

C
Christ Before Herod, Mykola-Morokhovsky, 1637-1638
Christ Before Pilate, Mykola-Morokhovsky, 1637-1638
Christ in Majesty, Second half of the 15th century
Christ in the House of Mary and Martha, Ivan Rutkovich, 1697-1699
Christ of the Vine, Mid-18th century
Christ Pantocrator, 6th century
Christ Pantocrator, 1363.
Christ Pantocrator, 15th century
The Crucifixion
The Crucifixion, 14th century
The Crucifixion, with a Portrait of the Cossack Colonel Leonty Svechka, late 17th century

D
Deesis, 1732
Deesis, Late 15th century
Deesis, Master Dimitry, 1565
Denys, the Great Prophets Daniel, Jeremiah and Jessaia, c. 15th century
The Descent into Hell, Fiodir Senkovich, 1616-1630
The Descent into Hell, Late 16th century
The Descent into Limbo, 15th century
The Descent into Limbo, First Half of the 17th century
The Descent into Limbo, Mid 16th century
The Descent of the Holy Spirit, Late 16th century
The Dormition, Fiodor Vyshensky, 1608
The Dormition, Master Alexei, 1547

E
The Entombment, First Half of the 17th century
The Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Early 16th century

F
The Flight into Egypt, Late 17th century
The Flight of Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah, Stefan Mediatsky, 1659

G/I
The Great Panagea (The Virgin Orans), Early 12th century
The Intercession of the Virgin, Early 18th century
The Intercession of the Virgin, Late 17th century

J/M
The Judgement of the Sanhedrin, Mykola-Morokhovsky, 1637-1638
A male and a female martyr, 6th or 7th century
Menologion of the Month of February, c. 15th century
The Miracle of St George and the Dragon, 14th century
The Miracle of St George and the Dragon, 15th century

N
The Nativity of Christ, Mid 16th century
The Nativity of St. John the Baptist, 15th century
The Nativity of the Virgin, 15th century
The Nativity of the Virgin, Mid-18th century

O
The Old-Testament Trinity, 1734-1735

P
The Passion of Christ, 15th century
The Presentation in the Temple, First Half of the 17th century
The Presentation in the Temple, Mid 16th century
The Presentation in the Temple, the Baptism, the Anastasia (or the Descent into Limbo), the Transfiguration, 10th century

The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, 1732
The Prophet Daniel, 1732
The Prophet Elias in the Desert, c. 15th century

R
The Raising of Lazarus, Late 14th or early 15th century
The Raising of Lazarus, the Moving into Jerusalem,  the Ascension, the Pentecost, 10th century
The Resurrection, Late 16th century
Royal Doors, Mid-16th century

S
St Anne, Late 17th century
St George, Early 18th century
St George on the Horse and Scenes from His Life, 14th century
St John Chrysostom (from the Deesis), 15th century
St John the Evangelist and Prochorus, Mid 16th century
St John the Baptist, 6th century
St John the Baptist (from the Deesis), 15th century
St John the Baptist, Mid-14th century
St Juliana, 1732
St Luke the Evangelist, 1056-1057
St Luke the Evangelist, Late 12th-early 13th century
St Nicolas and scenes of his life, 10th century
St Mark the Evangelist, 1164
St Matthew the Evangelist, 14th century
St Nicetas and the Demon, Mid 16th century
St Paraskieva and Saint Barbara, Mid 16th century
St Peter, 6th century
St Sergius and Saint Bacchus, 7th century
Sts Blase and Spiridon with the Herd, 14th century
The Saints Marytyrs Barbara and Katharina, Mid-18th century

The Saints Martyrs Juliana and Anastasia, Mid-18th century
Sts Vladimir, Boris and Gleb, Late 17th century
The Synaxis of the Nine Archangels, First half of the 18th century
The Synaxis of the Saint Bishops, 1073

T/V
The Transfiguration, Late 14th-early 15th century
The Transfiguration, Late 14th-early 15th century
The Vernicle, 1637-1638
The Vernicle, Middle of 12th century
The Vernicle, Mid 16th century
Virgin and Child, 6th century
The Virgin (Bratskaya), 1734-1735
The Virgin Elusa, Late 15th-early 16th century
The Virgin of Elusa, Second half of the 16th century
The Virgin of Haghiosoritisa, called “Monasterium Tempuli”, 6th-7th century
The Virgin Hodigitria, 1732
The Virgin Hodigitria, Early 17th century
The Virgin Hodigitria, Late 13th-early 14th century
Virgin of Khobi, c. 15th-16th century
The Virgin of the Akcathistos Hymn, Stephan Mediatsky, 1659
The Virgin of the Caves (Svenskaya), 11th-early 12th century
The Virgin of Tolg, 13th century
The Virgin of Vladimir, 11th-early 12th century
The Virgin with Child between Two Angels, 6th-7th century
The Virgin (Yeletskaya), 1700-1703
The Virgin (Yeletskaya), Early 18th century

W
The Washing of Feet, Mykola-Morokhovsky, 1637-1638